

# TUNISIA'S FRAGILE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## **TUNISIA'S FRAGILE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION**

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**TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2015**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:04 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order.

After recognizing myself and Ranking Member Deutch for 5 minutes each for our opening statements, I will then recognize any member seeking recognition for 1 minute. We will then hear from our witnesses. Thank you to our witnesses for being here. I apologize that we did not get a chance to shake your hand and say thank you beforehand.

The witnesses' prepared statements will be made a part of the record. Members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

Before we begin, I would like to recognize the Tunisian Ambassador to the United States, who is in attendance today. We welcome the Ambassador when he comes, and look forward to continuing to work with Tunisia to help its people realize their goal of a democratic future. The Chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes.

Perhaps it is fitting that Tunisia, the nation that started the Arab Spring, is the only country in the Middle East and North Africa that has made any significant progress toward democracy. But that future success is still very far from certain. Despite all of the positive gains that Tunisia has made over the past 1½ years-plus, from adopting a new constitution to electing a new Parliament and the first real free and fair Presidential elections since its independence, it has been two high profile terror attacks in Tunisia that has really, sadly, captured the world's attention in this North African country. And with greater scrutiny over Tunisia's security situation, the international community has also highlighted some of the other struggles the current government is facing as it strives toward democracy.

One of the major stumbling blocks for the new Tunisian Government is turning its economy around. As the recent terror attacks at the hotels on the east coast of the country reminded us, Tunisia is largely dependent on the tourism industry. Tourism is respon-

sible, in fact, for some 15 percent of the total GDP. Tunisia's tourism industry is already taking a hit from the economic troubles in Europe. They might just not be able to recover if there is any lasting damage to its tourism economy. In fact, Tunisia's President stated that another terror attack like the one last month could cause the collapse of his government. But cracks in the country's economic outlook were already there. The government needs to do more to fundamentally address the economic challenges as well as the security challenges if it is to continue to have the support of the people of Tunisia.

And that is why programs like the Tunisian-American Enterprise Fund, which invests in small and medium businesses to spur economic growth and employment, are steps in the right direction. Democracies aren't formed overnight, but it becomes difficult for people who have been through so much and who have come so far to be patient and to understand that this is a long process, and that there will be ups and downs along the way.

The nascent government needs some major accomplishments that it can point to in order to really solidify its support for Tunisia's democracy project. And that is where the United States could play a very important role. The stability of Tunisia and the viability of its democratic transition are not only strategically important to the United States and the region, but it is important to all of us who believe in democracy and what the people of Tunisia are trying to accomplish for themselves.

It would reaffirm the significance of the demonstrations that millions of Tunisians participated in to get this started. And it could still prove to be the spark for change across the entire region—the example for others to emulate. That is why it is critical that the U.S. invests our assistance in Tunisia wisely, and that our policy puts the people of Tunisia in the best place to achieve their goals.

We need to ensure that our security assistance is going to building up Tunisia's capability to protect its citizens, to enforce its laws, to defend its borders from the terrorist threats coming from Libya and Algeria or returning from fighting with the terror groups in Iraq and Syria.

Last week's designation of Tunisia as a major non-NATO ally was a very positive step forward. We are going to need not only a partner willing to cooperate with us in the fight against ISIL, al-Qaeda, and any other terror group, but an able partner as well, because make no mistake, Tunisia is home to the most foreign fighters that have flocked to Iraq and Syria.

Once these guys return and put into practice what they have learned on the battlefield, Tunisia will have its hands full. We must also ensure that we are helping Tunisia build the foundation for democracy by supporting the rule of law, civil society, and respect for human rights. We need to help the Tunisian Government strengthen its institutions and consolidate the political gains that they have made in these past 4 years. In short, we need to invest in Tunisia's future if we want to ensure that the future will be a democratic one.

I commend the people of Tunisia for not letting the recent terror attacks disrupt their progress toward democracy, and for their commitment to this transition that they began in 2010 and have paid

a very high price for. They deserve our support. And with that support, they could one day be the model for other countries in the region. With that, I would like to turn to my good friend, the ranking member, Ted Deutch, for his opening statement.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman, for calling this very timely and important hearing. And thanks for our witnesses for the great work that your institutions do around the world to support democracy.

Tunisia has been hailed as the success story of the Arab Spring. It has by any measure been the most promising transition from autocracy to democracy. Constitutional reforms have progressed, parliamentary elections have now been held twice. Political parties have proven that they can not only peacefully transfer power, but they can govern together in a coalition. But transitions are not without bumps. As is the case with every democracy, whether a few years old or a few centuries old, there are internal tensions within society. But the success of a democracy is in part based on foundations established within a country that allow and encourage debate and freedom of expression from all parts of society.

For example, the parliamentary elections of 2014 showed an electorate that wanted its government to go in a different direction. The election of the Nidaa Tounes party over the Islamist Ennahda party could have been a disastrous change of power, but the Parliament committed to a transition that, even if challenging, would nevertheless remain peaceful. I have to say this was very much noticed and respected here in Congress. With the expansion of civil society groups, political parties, and media outlets in Tunisia, more voices are contributing to the national dialogue about the current state of the country and the best decisions for moving forward.

The government should pay heed to the discourse and act in the best interests of the Tunisian people and the stability of the state. Since the revolution, Tunisia has struggled to regain economic prosperity. There is great concern that Tunisia cannot fully stabilize and complete its democratic transition if the economy doesn't grow. Tunisia is currently facing an unemployment rate of 15 percent, and that rate nearly triples among working class youth. But Tunisia is a sophisticated society with an educated and professional workforce, and the government must implement reforms to open and expand the economy. Achieving success and political reforms, which includes receiving popular legitimacy, must go hand in hand with improving the people's economic opportunities.

Tourism, long a key revenue stream for the country, has struggled, particularly amid the recent terrorist attacks that have caused countries such as Great Britain to discourage travel, and foreign investment and trade have suffered as well. I support our country's aid efforts to support the Tunisian economy, such as the establishment of the Tunisian-American Enterprise Fund and sovereign loan guarantees. We all fear that the recent spate of terror attacks threaten to undermine Tunisia's success. I offer my condolences to the victims and their families of the deadly terrorist attacks this year on the Bardo Museum in Tunis and in Sousse, many of whom were foreign nationals. Tunisia is struggling with homegrown terror cells, the proliferation of terrorist groups such as

AQIM, Ansar al-Sharia, and the Islamic State within its borders, as well as external threats coming from Libya and Algeria.

Tunisians have traveled at an alarming rate to train with ISIS. And the threat of their return home looms. And with reportedly one of the largest foreign contingents in Iraq and in Syria, the country must address ways to improve security conditions. The government's decision to issue a state of emergency certainly speaks to the high level of threats facing the country, but it must be careful to provide for the security of its citizens without restricting basic civil liberties guaranteed by the Tunisian constitution.

I support President Obama's decision to designate Tunisia a major non-NATO ally and the decision to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Tunisia. These are clear signs that this administration recognizes the country's post-2011 achievements, its commitment to cooperating on mutual security threats, and the national security interests for our country, and bolstering the capabilities of a North African ally in a very tumultuous neighborhood. It is also important to acknowledge the great work that each of your organizations have done and continue to do every day.

I often speak about the role of our foreign assistance program. And I believe that it is within our national security interests to offer not only military assistance, but also political, social, and economic aid to our overseas partners. The programs run by your organizations and the successes they have achieved offer strong evidence for the incredible return on these investments.

Tunisia has taken great steps toward democracy, and the progress achieved since 2011 should be lauded. To sustain success, sustain success and to push forward, the government must continue to work across political parties to address the priorities of today's Tunisia. And it is my great hope that it does not sacrifice this progress in the name of security.

I look forward to discussing with our witnesses today how U.S. policy can support Tunisia's path forward to democracy, economic prosperity, and greater security. And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Deutch.

I now would like to yield to Mr. Chabot of Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Madam Chairman, for calling this important hearing. Tunisia could be a model in many ways to its neighbors in the region for having forged a democratic government following the revolutionary overthrow of its authoritarian regime in 2011. And as we all know, it had a dramatic impact because it essentially set off the Arab Spring throughout the area. And we have seen tumultuous both positive and negative outcomes of that.

But it did start really in Tunisia. At the same time, the growing terrorist threat in Tunisia is worrisome as terrorist networks have gained influence and ground. The recent mass disappearance of 33 people is a sign of radicalization among some young Tunisians along the border with Libya. And it is clear that Tunisia now faces another challenge of impeding, stopping this recruitment, and preventing further attacks against its citizens and the effect that that will have on the tourist industry, which is absolutely critical to the country.

And so we look forward to the hearing, and I want to especially thank Ambassador Green, who is a friend and colleague of many

of us, who served about 8 years here in Congress together. And he was a leader on a whole range of issues. And it is good to have him back. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I echo that sentiment. Thank you so much, Mr. Chabot.

And now I would like to introduce our witnesses. First, we are pleased to welcome Ambassador Mark Green, who is the president of the International Republican Institute. He is a former U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania, and served as a Member of Congress, as Mr. Chabot just pointed out, representing Wisconsin's 8th District from 1999 to 2007. It is always a delight to see you, Ambassador.

Second, we welcome back Mr. Leslie Campbell, who is the senior associate and regional director of the National Democratic Institute. Previously, he was the chief of staff to the leader of the New Democratic Party in the Canadian House of Commons, and has served as a guest lecturer at Georgetown University. Welcome back.

Third, we also welcome back Mr. Aaron Zelin, who is the Richard Borow fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He has conducted extensive research on jihadi groups, with a focus on North Africa and Syria, and is writing his dissertation for Kings College in London on the Tunisian jihadi movement. As a recipient of that final degree, my condolences to you. Good luck with that.

And last, but certainly not least, we welcome back Mr. William Sweeney, who serves as the president and CEO of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Formerly, he served in the board of directors of IFES, conducting several high profile elections across the world, and served as vice president of Global Government Affairs for EDS.

And I would like to commend our panelists today, and I hope that you have all had the opportunity to see the newspaper The Hill this morning. Our panelists wrote a great op-ed, which was published in The Hill, on Tunisia. So thank all of you for your commitment to the people of Tunisia and for promoting U.S. values to a key ally in the region. Great job. And Mr. Ambassador, we will begin with you.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MARK GREEN, PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE**

Ambassador GREEN. Great. Thank you. Thanks, Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, and Mr. Chabot. I am honored to be here and to have this opportunity to speak on the brightest hope for democracy in Middle East and North Africa, Tunisia.

At IRI, we believe that Tunisia's remarkable journey toward democracy can serve both as an inspiration for those hoping to shape their own democratic path, and also a rejoinder to those who claim that democracy has little chance outside the Western world. Tunisia's story should also serve as a symbol to policymakers of what nonprofit organizations like IRI, NDI, and IFES can do with U.S. Government support when we work as one team. I had the privilege of observing the parliamentary round of voting in last year's elections. Like others, I was struck by how Tunisia's political stakeholders showed a truly unwavering commitment to democratic principles throughout the process.

Both in victory and in defeat, Tunisia's political competitors accepted the voters' will. That is particularly striking in a region too often haunted by polarization, sectarianism, and extremist violence. In my view, the Tunisian people have shown their mettle. And as the country faces its new challenges, we must show our mettle and our willingness to help.

The administration should be commended for joining with Congress to expand U.S. security assistance to Tunisia through foreign military financing, military training, and security sector reform efforts. We must also be smart about the kind of security assistance we provide. We want to help the country reform security services that were created under an authoritarian President's reign to ensure that they are now ethical, citizen-centered, and just. The administration and Congress should also be commended for the considerable economic assistance being provided.

Tunisia's economy, as noted, has floundered largely since 2011, and the terrible June 26 terrorist attack will only create even greater economic pressure on a country still grappling with the effects of previous mistakes and bad policies. IRI's most recent polling in Tunisia shows that unemployment and the economy are the issues weighing most heavily on the minds of Tunisians, particularly young Tunisians, surpassing even security.

Tunisia needs to carry out reforms that will remove stifling bureaucracy, encourage small and medium enterprise growth, attract foreign direct investment, and produce a skilled workforce. As they take on those reforms, we should all be there to help. Since the elections, IRI has focused its attention on helping the new government identify and meet key policy priorities by strengthening inter-ministerial planning, coordination, and communications. We are supporting the Tunisian-led process of decentralization to ensure that all of Tunisia's regions are listened to.

As many of you know, the disconnect between Tunisia's coastal and interior regions was a key factor prompting the 2011 revolution. We are also supporting a national accountability network that is strengthening the involvement of Tunisian youth. As we noted in our election statements last year, the lack of youth voter participation is a serious concern that Tunisian leaders must address. Our polling shows great interest on the part of youth in building a more democratic and entrepreneurial Tunisia. At the same time, however, many youth apparently don't carry that interest over to participating in key democratic institutions. That obviously must change.

Madam Chair, we have been asked to offer some recommendations for Tunisia going forward, and we are honored to do so. For Fiscal Year 2016, the administration is seeking to more than double last year's level of assistance. We agree with that plan. However, according to one analysis, only 16 percent of that assistance will fall into the category of governing justly and democratically. We respectfully suggest that much more needs to be done.

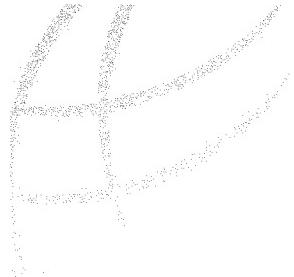
We need to see in this new strategy real support for continued political party development. If Tunisians don't believe that political parties effectively represent their interests, especially at the local level, it can worsen regional tensions and undermine confidence in the national democratic process. Furthermore, if political parties

aren't seen as issue-based, there is much greater potential for renewed polarization, especially with respect to secular and Islamist political groups.

Tunisia will hold elections, probably, in 2016. The time to foster genuine democratic competition is right now. It is to go to work especially to bring in young Tunisians. We think it is very, very important. We also need to continue to support the work of civil society groups, in many ways the first and most immediate way that young people could become involved in the process. And again, if it is a broken record in our testimony, we think it is crucial that young people be connected to constructive democratic institutions so that they have a stake in the survival of democracy.

To wrap up, Madam Chair, Ranking Member Deutch, we have all seen remarkable things take place in Tunisia in these last several years. Much has been accomplished. Again, we are proud at IRI, working with our sister organizations NDI and IFES, to have played a role in that effort, but we know that the transition is fragile, and it needs all of us and our help. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Ambassador.  
[The prepared statement of Ambassador Green follows:]



## Congressional Testimony

### Tunisia's Fragile Democratic Transition

Testimony by Ambassador Mark Green  
President  
International Republican Institute

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

July 14, 2015

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, Members of the Committee, I am honored to be with you today and to have this opportunity to speak on the Middle East and North Africa's brightest hope for democracy, Tunisia.

At the [International Republican Institute](#) (IRI), we believe that Tunisia's remarkable journey towards democracy over these last five years can serve both as an inspiration to those who hope to shape their own democratic path and a rejoinder to those who claim that democracy has little chance outside the Western world. Tunisia's story should also serve as a symbol to policymakers of what nonprofit organizations like IRI, the [National Democratic Institute](#) (NDI) and the [International Foundation for Electoral Systems](#) (IFES), with U.S. government support, can do when we work as one team.

Members of the Committee, I had the privilege of observing the Tunisian elections during the first round of balloting in October 2014. Like all 141 of our observers who participated in the three rounds of elections last year, I was struck by the unwavering commitment to democratic principles shown by the country's main political stakeholders throughout the process.

Both in victory and in defeat, Tunisia's political competitors accepted the voters' will, which is particularly striking in a region of the world too often haunted by polarization, sectarianism and extremist violence. In my view, the Tunisian people have shown their mettle, and as the country faces the challenges that will no doubt emerge in coming months and years, we should stand ready to help.

#### **The Challenges of Tunisia's Fragile Transition**

Madam Chairman, last month's heinous and cowardly act of terror that killed 38 tourists on a Tunisian beach is a stark reminder of just how perilous Tunisia's transition to democratic rule remains. Tunisia is bordered to the south by Libya, and that country's political unraveling and growing security vacuum present major security challenges. After all, the Tunisian attacker in the June 26 attack trained in Libya, as did the perpetrators of the Bardo Museum terrorist strike on March 18.

Of course, Tunisia has its own challenges with extremism as well. Many reports suggest that Tunisia supplies the largest number of foreign fighters to the conflict in Syria and Iraq, estimated at 3,000 and now likely more. When those fighters eventually return home, having been further radicalized by continuing barbarism in Syria, it will present challenges to Tunisia's peace and security for many years.

The Obama Administration should be commended for working with Congress to expand U.S. security assistance to Tunisia through foreign military financing, military training and security sector reform efforts. All of this must continue. Acts of terror can undermine the country's ability to realize the economic benefits that should materialize from the new leadership in Tunisia.

Left unchecked, these acts of violence can also complicate relations between political stakeholders and renew polarization between secular and more Islamist-minded Tunisians. In light of the dangers, we in the U.S. must be smart about the kind of security assistance we provide. We want to help the country build security capabilities in ways that are consistent with the ethics and practices of democratic states. Proper training for security personnel and reform of the security services are of paramount importance.

The Administration and Congress should also be commended for the considerable economic assistance that is being provided. Tunisia's economy has floundered since 2011. Since tourism is a major part of the country's economy it remains to be seen how great an impact the recent June 26 attack will have on this summer's tourist season, but it will almost certainly create even greater economic pressure on leaders who are still grappling with the effects of former President Ben Ali's overly corrupt and bureaucratic regime. A June public opinion poll conducted by IRI reveals that unemployment at 39 percent is the issue weighing most heavily on the minds of Tunisians, surpassing even security at 26 percent!

Of course, tackling unemployment and overall economic challenges are as much about good policy by the Tunisian government, as they are U.S. economic support. As many of the country's leaders acknowledge, Tunisia needs to carry out reforms that will remove stifling bureaucracy, encourage small and medium enterprise growth in the private sector, increases access to credit, attract foreign direct investment and produce a workforce with the skillsets that cause employers to want to hire Tunisian college graduates. Tunisia's policymakers need to make the right policy choices on laws ranging from competition and banking to the education system.

Like our sister organizations, we at IRI are proud of the modest role we've played in assisting Tunisians with their historic steps towards a more democratic future. What we submit to you today is that the country's next crucial steps – ones aimed at increasing both security and economic growth – will also need significant democracy and governance investments.

#### **How Democracy and Governance Assistance Helps**

Since the elections, IRI has focused its attention on helping the new government identify and meet key policy priorities by strengthening inter-ministerial planning, coordination and communications. We've also worked to provide technical skills training to key communications staff within government ministries so that they can better interact with the Tunisian public and help them understand the government's progress on key reform priorities.

We believe it is essential that the government is able to identify citizen needs, build the capacities necessary to plan for those needs, and also manage public expectations on how quickly Tunisia's pressing priorities can be addressed. All of this is crucial to growing a stable, sustainable democratic Tunisia. We are appreciative of the support we receive from

the U.S. State Department [Middle East Partnership Initiative](#) (MEPI) to enable this vitally important work.

Another important part of IRI's governance work in supporting the Tunisian-led process of decentralization is through a [National Endowment for Democracy](#) (NED) funded program that ensures all of Tunisia's regions are listened to and contributing to the country's national dialogue on decentralized power, checks and balances and citizen-centered decision-making. As many of you know, disconnect between Tunisia's coastal and interior regions was a key factor prompting the 2011 revolution against Ben Ali. This problem remains a source of tension today. IRI helps the government promote greater inclusivity in decision-making between and within regions.

Additionally, IRI is supporting a national accountability network that is strengthening the involvement of Tunisian youth activists in community groups. As we noted in our election observation statements ([parliamentary elections](#), [presidential election](#), [presidential runoff](#)) last year, the lack of youth voter participation is a serious concern that Tunisia's leaders must address, especially given the prominent role played by youth in the 2011 revolution.

[Our polling in recent years](#) shows great interest on the part of youth in building a more democratic and entrepreneurial Tunisia. At the same time, however, many youth apparently don't translate that interest into their participation in key democratic institutions either due to lack of access, or lack of understanding about the constructive role they can play in the political process. We assist the government in efforts to harness youth idealism and apply it to day-to-day policymaking.

### **Recommendations**

In its, Fiscal Year 2016 budget request, the Administration seeks to boost support to Tunisia to more than double last year's level. The approach appears to have strong bipartisan Congressional support which we commend, however, there is still more that should be done to assist Tunisia's new democracy. According to [an analysis by the Project on Middle East Democracy](#), only about 16 percent of overall assistance falls into the category of Governing Justly and Democratically.

We would respectfully suggest that governance support be further strengthened to help ensure the Tunisian transition stays on a democratic track. Communications infrastructure and capacity within Tunisian government ministries is somewhat rudimentary at present. Ministries lack efficient, secure internal communications platforms, leaving government employees to conduct official business through their personal accounts or via paper, SMS text messaging or Facebook. IRI is working with the Tunisian government to identify solutions to these challenges, however, we are running to keep pace with the numerous demands for assistance.

A second hole in the current U.S. democracy and governance strategy is an absence of support for continued political party development. At IRI, we would caution policymakers

against a dramatic shift away from political participation programs, especially given the initial investment made in parties in the last years. Our experience in Tunisia suggests the environment for political party participation remains in a state of transition, as it would in any new democracy. Tunisia's political parties still lack distinguishable identities or platforms and most have not developed the internal organizational structures to effectively serve as conduits of citizen interests at the regional or local levels.

If Tunisians do not believe political parties have presence or effectively represent their interests especially at the local level it exacerbates the country's regional tensions and can undermine confidence in the democratic process generally. Additionally, a potential for renewed polarization between the political parties exists, especially with respect to secular and Islamist political groups. If we are not actively working with the political parties to address these issues, little can be done to mitigate the risks. Finally, Tunisia will likely hold local elections in 2016. The time to work with parties to prepare for democratic competition in these elections is now, especially if we want to encourage greater inclusivity of young Tunisians in the country's political life.

A third area where more should be done is support for Tunisia's increasingly dynamic civil society sector. The U.S. government is already making an important contribution to promote civic participation, increase transparency and accountability and help Tunisia's growing number of nongovernmental organizations and community-based groups develop the management know-how to succeed as organizations.

Experience shows that a vibrant civil society is a key to achieving greater inclusivity in any country's political life, and strengthening this sector in the crucial years ahead will both hasten Tunisia's democratic development and make efforts to combat extremism more effective. We should do everything we possibly can to help Tunisia involve the country's youth in the transition; after all, it was young Tunisians who led the wave of demands for change that brought down the authoritarian Ben Ali regime. Civil society offers an immediate channel for constructive youth engagement. It presents a meaningful path for young people to enter the arena, express their hopes and fears, and then find ways to turn their idealism into concrete reforms.

Fourth, the U.S. government should help the new government turn Tunisia's political parties and civil society into more active participants in the country's national dialogue on decentralization. Although other issues in the country may be more immediately pressing, it is vitally important that government leaders not overlook the delivery of good governance and the cementing of democratic institutions. While Tunisians know the path ahead is difficult, they must also believe that they, especially in the country's south and interior, have credible, capable representation that can be their voice at the national level. This is an essential part of giving every part of the country and every point of view a stake in the country's democratic success.

Fifth, the U.S. government should find ways to reinforce bold economic reform that tackles disastrous policies from the Ben Ali days and transitions to a market-based entrepreneurial system. Young people need to see that there is hope in the coming years for economic

opportunity and good paying employment. Among other things, I would encourage the leaders of the [Millennium Challenge Corporation](#) (MCC), on whose Board I sit, to have a dialogue with Tunisian leaders about the possibility of qualifying for an MCC Threshold program. I know this idea has been under discussion since the 2011 revolution; indeed, Tunisia was threshold eligible in September 2011. Whether Tunisia can be made eligible or not, there must be a way for the expertise and principles of MCC to help chart the country's path ahead.

#### **Conclusion**

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, with all of the challenges that seems to come from the Middle East and the challenges posed by authoritarian pushback against democracy globally, we cannot lose sight of the most promising signs of democracy's advance. Tunisia is an example of what can be achieved when our democracy community stands with local citizens seeking to build a democratic future. It is vitally important work that deserves our steadfast commitment and support, especially in the face of extremism. Much has been achieved in Tunisia since 2011 with the active involvement of the United States through the good work of organizations like IRI, NDI and IFES.

Tunisia's transition remains fragile in a hostile neighborhood – and there will no doubt be new threats and challenges in the months and years ahead. But I think back to the incredible atmosphere of national pride and democratic commitment that accompanied Tunisia's national elections this past year. I think about the striking reaction of condemnation Tunisians had to the vicious Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks that occurred in France last January. I recall the images of Tunisian hotel staff forming a human chain to prevent more killing on the beach in Sousse on June 26.

I know democracy is within reach in Tunisia. While we cannot and should not choose Tunisia's path ourselves, where a country has taken courageous steps to shape its own future – a future that is democratic and which respects human liberty – I believe it is in our vital interests to come forward and support them. Tunisia has so much potential and so much to offer. Let's help them get there.

Thank you.



Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Campbell.

**STATEMENT OF MR. LESLIE CAMPBELL, SENIOR ASSOCIATE AND REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE**

Mr. CAMPBELL. Thank you, Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, members of the subcommittee. It is a pleasure to be here again to talk about Tunisia. Nearly 5 years after the protests toppled Ben Ali, Tunisia has adopted a modern constitution, and for the first time democratically elected a new legislature and President. The process of getting to those elections was not without its challenges, with a prolonged constitution drafting process that was tested by occasional political deadlock, and twice rocked by political assassinations.

The road forward toward consolidating democratic gains, building the capacity and sustainability of governing institutions, ensuring the protection of freedoms achieved through the revolution, and enacting much needed economic and security sector reforms has not and will not be easy. Tunisia's fragile polity today seems more vulnerable than at any other point to date. But on a hopeful note, I have to say that several factors have differentiated Tunisia from regional neighbors which have struggled with their process's transitions, either succumbing to a return to authoritarianism or slipping into violent chaos.

What makes Tunisia or what has made Tunisia different? Number one, Tunisia took time to develop a constitution, undertaking a deliberative and representative process rather than rushing into snap elections that could have exacerbated regional differences and partisan polarization. As it has historically, the Tunisian military stayed out of politics and refrained from interfering with economic policy. It remained a neutral institution focused on defending the country's borders, and it did not enter the political fray. Civil society was allowed to flourish, and secured a role in the transitional process, demanding dialogue, compromise, and inclusivity. Civil society organizations, trade unions, women's groups, community development associations were treated as important partners in the democratic transition.

And finally, number four, Tunisia's political leadership generally avoided hyperbole and polarization, seeking compromise, and embracing the concept of no victor, no vanquished. These factors manifested in the highly competitive, but ultimately peaceful and credible elections, of 2014. Beyond voting in significant numbers, tens of thousands of people participated as candidates, poll workers, candidate representatives, and citizen monitors.

Notably, Tunisia defied the oft repeated warnings of naysayers that Islamists would never give up power once elected to office, the notion of one vote, one time—one vote—one person, one vote, one time, and the majority Ennahda party conceded defeat in the legislative elections and joined its opponents in a national unity government.

Throughout this transition, NDI and IRI and IFES, working together, as was said, we provided Tunisia's democratic leadership with advice and information on comparative democratic experiences. Through the United States Agency for International Devel-

opment (USAID), the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative, the group that is represented here received funding to establish programs within weeks of Ben Ali's departure. Ahead of the 2014 elections, NDI's U.S. Government-supported activities helped create a space for inclusive political debate that would inform citizens and expose them to various political options.

We worked to keep parties, political parties focused on building lasting structures and creating platforms that incorporate citizen concerns. The parties' investments in their internal structures, recruitment of party activists, and platform development have already contributed to democratic stabilization. The calls from the United States and the international community during the uprising of 2011 demanding that the Tunisian Government listen to pleas for dignity lent important legitimacy to citizen aspirations throughout the Arab world. Despite Tunisia's numerous challenges, there are reasons for great hope.

Tunisia's transition, symbolized by the adoption of its new constitution, remains on track, setting it apart. But in terms of recommendations, Tunisia is in need, still in need of assistance to democracy, to its economy and to security reform, and the United States should continue to support popular demands for transparency, accountability, and freedom.

One of the themes for today I think is going to be how to find that balance between freedom and security. And I look forward to questions on that exact topic. But this means as a hopeful exception in the Arab world, which is managing and inspiring a fragile transition, Tunisia wants, needs, in fact demands Western solidarity and investment. And I hope that we can respond adequately to that.

The administration and U.S. Congress should be steadfast at supporting an enabling environment for parties and civil society to continue to build a democratic Tunisia, and support the aspirations of both Tunisian citizens and those around the world who look to Tunisia for inspiration. Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Campbell, very much.

[Mr. Campbell did not submit a prepared statement.]

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Zelin.

#### **STATEMENT OF MR. AARON ZELIN, RICHARD BOROW FELLOW, THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY**

Mr. ZELIN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, members of the committee, for giving me the opportunity to testify today on Tunisia's transition, in particular focusing on recommendations related to the jihadi threat.

Currently, there are two main groups that are attacking the Tunisian state, an al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb cutout called Katibat Uqba ibn Nafi, and the Islamic State, which has a safe haven in Libya as well as cells inside of Tunisia. Since the elections late last year, there have been 11 known terrorist attacks claimed or believed to be conducted by AQIM or the Islamic State. In response, there have been 21 arrests of those suspected of planning attacks or being connected to attacks that have already occurred.

The Tunisian military has also been involved in operations against insurgents 10 times in this time span. This illustrates that

the threat from jihadis is very real, but also that the Tunisian State has been quite proactive in attempting to stem any more attacks, whether in the form of terrorism or insurgent activity. You can get more specifics on the background of both AQIM and the Islamic State's activities in Tunisia in my written testimony, as well as what policies the Tunisian Government and the U.S. have already implemented over the past ½ year, which has largely been military focused, or we can talk more about it in the Q and A.

Since we only have short amount of time, I wanted to focus more on recommendations that can complement the military options already taken. They might seem less sexy, but they are just as important. Regarding the strengthening of the rule of law, Tunisia's draft security bill is highly controversial and has major critics, which could lead to a repeat of the 2003 terrorism law passed by Ben Ali that was regarded as against human rights. It had many loose definitions, and unjustly led to many arrests that had nothing do with terrorism.

From 2003 to 2011, a number of individuals that were arrested were not terrorists, but while they were in prison they became radicalized. As we saw following the March 2011 prisoner amnesty, many of the individuals that had been radicalized in prison then were involved with Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia. Therefore, if the security bill is passed, it will only lead to a repeat of what has already occurred, which would suggest the Essebsi-led Government has not learned from the past. The U.S. should provide advice on a security bill that is more in line with the rule of law and best practices in other democratic states.

Regarding security sector reform, many Tunisians think that nothing drastic will change unless major steps are taken to address the corruption in the ministry of interior. There have been very little reforms made in the past 4 years.

Further, the new minister, Najem Gharsalli, was a judge under Ben Ali, who has been accused of deep corruption by many within civil society. Many of the old practices of the former regime are creeping back too, including within the prison system. For example, the Tunisian Organization Against Torture is currently investigating almost 70 torture cases in 2015.

Torture is an easy way to radicalize anyone. This must end, and the United States should not stand idly by and ignore this wretched trend. As a result, prison reforms need to take place as well. Moreover, there are many arbitrary arrests that are once again occurring, even if they have no connections to jihadi networks or attacks that have occurred. This could be a source of radicalization as well. It is imperative that the United States works with the Tunisian MOI and its police forces to professionalize what it does. They need to better learn the art of intelligence gathering, and then once a case starts, doing the proper paperwork for preparing it to go to court.

A major retraining and reeducation could be something the United States helps with in terms of capacity building. This type of effort needs patience, though, since Tunisia is coming out of 45 years of authoritarian rule. Therefore, it is crucial for there to be a sense of duty and discipline instilled within the police force. The key is to transform the body into a force that is seen as a protector,

not a force that takes away individuals' rights or are involved in abuses of power. Related to this, during the uprisings many courts, police stations, and police equipment were destroyed. Therefore, instead of providing only money, it would be worthwhile if the United States funded specific rebuilding projects. That way it would cut down on potential corruption from the government, but also provide new jobs for locals since the economy remains the most important issue for the average Tunisian. Therefore, it will provide tangible benefits that the local populace can see instead of monetary promises that might seem distant.

And finally, related to public relations and transparency, since the uprising the Tunisian Government has had difficulty with its ability to properly communicate after attacks have occurred. In all high profile cases, the government has been slow at articulating transparently what occurred and what the government is doing about it. If it wants to solidify its democratic bona fides it needs to leave the more shadowy and murky as well as secretive aspects of investigations in the past. The public has a right to know.

There are two recent examples in the aftermath of the Sousse beach attack that highlight some of these deficiencies. First, when Essebsi announced the reimplementation of the state of emergency, he stated, "If similar attacks occur again, the state will collapse." Not only was this comment irresponsible, it was also quite amateurish. He should have been reassuring the public. Moreover, on the same day, the MOI spokesman explained that it did not want to blame the attack in Sousse on the Islamic State because advertising their involvement would radicalize the public. This illustrates a lack of trust by the government in the public to remain vigilant and resilient. This is something the United States can provide advice on how to more professionalize the government's public persona and ability to articulate properly to the public.

Beyond reforming issues related to the security front, as everyone is well aware, there needs to be serious economic reforms that affect the entire country, and not just those on the coast. At the end of the day, Tunisians just want to support their families, live a good life, and be able to travel within their country without feeling insecure.

Not all is lost, and the Tunisian Government can right the ship, but it needs to do more and not fall back on old habits from the Ben Ali era, which have already proven failures. It needs to also have a vision which goes beyond rhetoric. It needs to inspire the younger generation, otherwise individuals that have connections or are well off will move to Germany or France, while those that might not have those opportunities could be swayed easier into joining up with jihadis who could provide guidance and a vision, even if the individual does not necessarily agree with the ideology from the beginning.

The United States should be there to lend a helping hand based off our own experiences and best practices with transitioning countries in Asia, South America, and eastern Europe. The Tunisian people deserve an honest and good ally, and the United States can be that.

Let's help the Tunisian people complete their dream that started more than 4 years ago. America can provide that guidance and assistance. Thank you very much for your time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, sir.  
[The prepared statement of Mr. Zelin follows:]



## Tunisia's Fragile Democratic Transition

Aaron Y. Zelin

Richard Borow Fellow,  
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Testimony submitted to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

July 14, 2015

Thank you, Mrs. Chairwoman and members of the committee, for giving me the opportunity to testify today on Tunisia's transition since its elections late last year. In particular, focusing on the jihadi threat to it and the Tunisian and American governments' policies in dealing with the problem. Currently, there are two main groups that are attacking the Tunisian state: an al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb cut-out called Katibat Uqba ibn Nafi (KUIN), mainly based in Jebel Chaambi on the western border with Algeria, and the Islamic State, which has a safe haven in Libya as well as cells inside of Tunisia.

### Background on Terrorism-Related Activity and Actions in Response

Since the presidential elections were conducted late last year, there have been a number of terrorism-related activities and actions taken in response inside of Tunisia. There have been eleven publicly known terrorist attacks either claimed or believed to be conducted by KUIN and the Islamic State since December 1, 2014.<sup>1</sup> In response to this as well as proactive measures done by the state, there have been twenty-one occasions of arrests of those suspected of planning attacks or being connected to attacks that had already occurred.<sup>2</sup> In addition to terrorist attacks and arrests, the Tunisian military has also been involved in offensive and defensive operations against insurgents ten times in this time span.<sup>3</sup> This illustrates that the threat from jihadis is very real, but also that the Tunisian state has been quite proactive in attempting to stem any more attacks whether in the form of terrorism or insurgent activity.

### The Islamic State Comes to Tunisia

In mid-December last year, the Islamic State had its first overt message directed at the Tunisian state and its people.<sup>4</sup> In particular, Aboubaker el-Hakim (who went by Abu al-Muqatil in the video) claimed responsibility

<sup>1</sup> Attacks by month: December, 1; January, 2; February, 1; March, 3; April, 1; May, 1; and June, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Arrests by month: December, 3; January, 1; February, 4; March, 5; April, 3; May, 2; June, 2; and July, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Military actions by month: February, 2; March, 3; April, 2; May, 1; June, 1; and July, 1.

<sup>4</sup> The Islamic State, "Message to the People of Tunisia," *al-Ittihad Media*, December 17, 2014.

for the assassination of Tunisia's secular leftist politicians in 2013: "Yes, tyrants, we're the ones who killed Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi." This confirmed the Ennahda-led government at the time's accusation that el-Hakim was involved. Beyond calling for more violence and for Tunisians to remember its imprisoned brothers and sisters, he also called upon the Tunisian people to pledge *baya* (allegiance) to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, noting that they should raise the banner of *tawhid* (pure monotheism) high and rip the flags of Charles de Gaulle and Napoleon down (alluding to colonialism and the historically close relations between Tunisia and France).

More recently, on April 7, Abu Yahya al-Tunisi of the Islamic State's Wilayat Tarabulus (Tripoli) in Libya urged Tunisians to come join the Islamic State in Libya,<sup>5</sup> the intention being to gain training and knowledge so that they will then return to Tunisia in order to establish and extend the writ of the Islamic State there. Only two days later, a new media account was created called Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiya (Soldiers of the Caliphate in Ifriqiya) Media Foundation. While unofficial, it was foreshadowing that the Islamic State was beginning to target Tunisia, in the same way it built up excitement and signaled a relationship with Boko Haram when it established al-Urwah al-Wuthqa (The Indissoluble Link) Media on the organization's behalf two months prior to the official pledge of *baya* from Abu Bakr Shekau to al-Baghdadi.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for the Bardo National Museum attack (which the government claims KUIN was responsible for),<sup>7</sup> Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiya Media announced the Islamic State's first claim of responsibility for an insurgent attack that occurred in Jebel al-Meghila near the town of Sbeitla where they conducted an ambush killing four and injuring twelve Tunisian soldiers on April 8.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiya Media has claimed responsibility on April 22 for a separate attack in Jebel Salloum, southeast of Kasserine City, leading to the death of one its fighters from Algeria, illustrating that Tunisians are not the only ones in the ranks of the Islamic State in Tunisia.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Islamic State official media disseminators are now claiming responsibility for attacks in Tunisia since May 2.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the most recent large-scale attack on the beach resort in Sousse in late June, it is believed that the Islamic State was also involved with the Bouchoucha Barracks attack on May 25.<sup>11</sup>

#### **A1-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's Tunisian Gambit**

Although KUIN was first identified as a Tunisian cut-out for AQIM in December 2012 by then Tunisian Interior Minister Ali Larayedh, it was not until mid-January this year that the battalion publicly acknowledged itself as being associated with AQIM.<sup>12</sup> It once again recognized its status as a unit of AQIM following the death of its leader Khalid Shaaib (Abu Sakhr Lukman) in late March to consolidate strength since there had been false rumors KUIN might switch sides to the Islamic State. These rumors emanated in part from a statement by KUIN showing support for IS, though there was no indication of *baya*—even AQAP released a

<sup>5</sup> The Islamic State, "Message to Our Brothers in Tunisia," *Wilayat Tarabulus Media Office*, April 7, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Clairvoyant: Boko Haram's Media and the Islamic State Connection," *Jihadology*, January 27, 2015, <http://jihadology.net/2015/01/27/the-clairvoyant-boko-harams-media-and-the-islamic-state-connection/>.

<sup>7</sup> The Islamic State, "Adopting the Bardo Museum Operation in Islamic Tunisia," *Idha'at al-Bayan*, March 19, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Jund al-Khilafa bi-Tunis, "Statement on the al-Meghila Operation," *Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiya Media*, April 14, 2015 and the Islamic State, "Akbar al-Yawm: al-Jumu'ah, 21 Jumadi al-Akhirah 1436 H," *Idha'at al-Bayan*, April 9, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Abu Jihad al-Jazairi, "On the Martyrdom of the Brother 'Abd al-Jabar Abu Zanad," *Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiya Media*, April 21, 2015 and "About the Jebel al-Salloum Operation," *Ajnad al-Khilafah bi-Ifriqiya Media*, April 22, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> The Islamic State, "Akbar al-Yawm: al-Sabt, 13 Rajab 1436 H," *Idha'at al-Bayan*, May 2, 2015; The Islamic State, "Akbar al-Yawm: al-Ahad, 14 Rajab 1436 H," *Idha'at al-Bayan*, May 3, 2015; and The Islamic State, "Akbar al-Yawm: al-Sabt, 10 Ramadan 1436 H," *Idha'at al-Bayan*, June 27, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> "Tunisia: Monitoring the Presence of Security and Armored Vehicles in the Capital," *Wilayat Tunis Media Office*, June 2, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Lebovich, "Confronting Tunisia's Jihadists," *Foreign Policy*, May 16, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/05/16/confronting-tunisias-jihadists/>.

statement in support of IS in Iraq after the fall of Mosul last year, illustrating the importance of differentiating between general support and a religiously binding pledge of allegiance.

KUIN has also identified with Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST) when announcing martyrs, highlighting how some of its fighters are former members. Yet for all intents and purposes, AST has become defunct with members either being arrested, going abroad to fight and train in Syria and Libya, or joining up with KUIN since it was designated by the Tunisian government as a terrorist organization in late August 2013.<sup>13</sup>

Since it first came into the public fore, KUIN has decided to remain obscure, though we do know it has been actively involved in a low-level insurgency with the Tunisian military for 2.5 years in Jebel Chaambi adjacent to the Algerian border and west of Kasserine. Members have also been arrested over the years for attempted attacks in different cities of Tunisia as well as for weapons smuggling. More recently, since mid-July last year, it has increased its online profile, at first through the Fajr al-Qayrawan Facebook and Twitter account and then Ifriqiya Media, a well-known nonpartisan aggregator of online jihadi releases from all Africa-based jihadi organizations. Only this past weekend did KUIN create an official media outlet for itself called al-Fatih (the conqueror). Up until then, the main content it released was showing pictures of its fighters, martyrs, training camps, and graphics with quotes from the Quran on them as well as claiming responsibility for attacks. KUIN even showed off a bunch of *ghanaim* (spoils of war) from its past operation in Hanchir Ettala.<sup>14</sup> KUIN's last known publicly claimed attack took place in mid-June when a Tunisian National Guard officer was killed and another four were injured in Ghardimaou in Jendouba Governorate.<sup>15</sup>

#### Tunisian and U.S. Policy Responses

Since the elections last December, the Tunisian government has both implemented and proposed a number of new policy options to deal with the jihadi problem. Some have been problematic though and should be advised against due to the curtailing of individuals' rights. International and local human rights organizations as well as regular Tunisian citizens are also interpreting some of these measures as a returning to the status quo of the Ben Ali era, which the United States must work and urge the Tunisian government not to succumb to. Otherwise, there is a very real chance that all the progress since 2011 will be lost and Tunisia will become a "shoulda, coulda, woulda" and "what if" case instead of continuing to move toward a consolidated democracy.

Here are the various steps taken by the Tunisian state since the election:

- **February 17, 2015:** Tunisia's Defense Ministry Farhat Horchani announced that security along the border with Libya has been reinforced to prevent any incursion by jihadis. The army is being backed up by units from the Tunisian National Guard in an integrated operation covering the entire border. Helicopters and warplanes were also being deployed to monitor air, land, and sea in order to stop incursions from Libya.<sup>16</sup>
- **April 2, 2015:** Tunisia said it plans to reopen a consulate in Syria and offered to invite the Syrian ambassador back to Tunisia in part to help track, at the time, an estimated 3,000 Tunisian foreign

<sup>13</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, "Tunis Designates Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia," *al-Wasat Blog*, August 28, 2013, <https://thewasat.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/tunis-designates-ansar-al-sharia-in-tunisia/>.

<sup>14</sup> KUIN, "Pictures of Spoils of War of the Mujahidin in the Hanchir Ettala Operation," *Ifriqiyya Media*, December 16, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Claimed by their official Twitter account on June 16, 2015: [https://twitter.com/kuinbal\\_ibn/status/610838274387628032](https://twitter.com/kuinbal_ibn/status/610838274387628032). This account has since been taken down, but I maintain a copy of the original claim of responsibility on my computer.

<sup>16</sup> Iouda Mzoudi, "Tunisia and Algeria send military reinforcements to borders with Libya," *Libya Herald*, February 17, 2015, <http://www.libyaherald.com/2015/02/17/tunisia-and-algeria-send-military-reinforcements-to-borders-with-libya/>.

fighters in Iraq and Syria.<sup>17</sup> When speaking to a parliamentary committee examining an anti-terror bill in mid-April, Tunisian Interior Minister Najem Gharsalli said his ministry had prevented "12,490 Tunisians from leaving Tunisian territory to travel to combat zones" in Iraq, Libya, and Syria since March 2013.<sup>18</sup> As of last week, according to the United Nations, there have been up to 5,500 Tunisian foreign fighters in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Mali, and Yemen.<sup>19</sup>

- **April 10, 2015:** The government sent the "Repression of Attacks against Armed Forces" bill to the parliament. The draft law sets out five years in prison for insulting the morale of the security forces and two years for anyone who publishes information on operations. Publication of any security documents can lead to a sentence of up to 10 years in prison. Many Tunisian political parties and unions have criticized the draft security bill, saying it could harm freedom of expression and other rights. For example, the Journalist Union President Neji Bghouri stated that the "law establishes a police state and dictatorship, we cannot accept this scandal," while the leader of the Popular Front Hamma Hammami argues that "the law is a window to the return of the police state and we categorically reject it."<sup>20</sup> On May 13, 2015, a number of human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Carter Center, among others, advocated dropping or amending the draft bill due to many potential human rights violations if implemented.<sup>21</sup>
- **May 13, 2015:** Tunisia announced that Religious Affairs Minister Battikh Othman was creating a specialized register to keep tabs on those who run and preach at mosques in the country. The government also announced the launch of a religious re-education program in the country's prisons.<sup>22</sup>
- **June 26, 2015:** The state announced that within a week it would close 80 mosques that remain outside the government's control for inciting violence.<sup>23</sup>
- **July 4, 2015:** Tunisia declared a state of emergency, which gives security forces more powers and limits the right of public assembly. After the attack in late June, the government had already tightened security, deploying more than 1,400 armed officers at hotels and beaches.<sup>24</sup>
- **July 8, 2015:** The Tunisian government announced plans to build a wall along its border with Libya in order to counter jihadis traversing the border. The wall will be about a third of the 310-mile border and will be finished by the end of the year.<sup>25</sup>

Much of the focus from the American perspective has been to grant more military assistance, aid, and training to the Tunisian state. While this is certainly important, the United States must not lag in providing other types of aid that will help Tunisia continue on its path to a consolidated democracy (which I will discuss more in my recommendations below). Since the beginning of the Tunisian uprising, the United States has provided \$570

<sup>17</sup> Tarek Amara, "Tunisia says plans to renew ties with Syria to help track fighters," *Reuters*, April 2, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/02/us-mideast-crisis-syria-tunisia-idUSKBN0M1I4420150402>.

<sup>18</sup> "Tunisia blocks more than 12,000 would-be jihadis: minister," *AFP*, April 17, 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Apr-17/294878-tunisia-blocks-more-than-12000-would-be-jihadists-minister.aspx>.

<sup>19</sup> "Almost 5,500 Tunisians in jihadist ranks: UN experts," *AFP*, July 10, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/almost-5-500-tunisians-jihadist-ranks-un-experts-201525340.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Tarek Amara, "Draft security law raises concerns about rights in new Tunisia," *Reuters*, April 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/20/tunisia-security-rights-idUSKBN0XH1CB20150420>.

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International et al., "Tunisia: Drop or Amend Security Bill," May 13, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/05/13/tunisia-drop-or-amend-security-bill>.

<sup>22</sup> Connor Shells, "Game Over For Tunisia's Extremist Preachers?," *Tunisia Live*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2015/05/13/tunisia-extremist-preachers-2/>.

<sup>23</sup> "Tunisia government says to close 80 mosques for inciting violence, after hotel attack," *Reuters*, June 26, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/tunisia-government-says-close-80-mosques-inciting-violence-004824930.html>.

<sup>24</sup> "Tunisia beach attack: State of emergency declared," *BBC News*, July 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33394847>.

<sup>25</sup> Aditya Tejas, "Tunisia To Build Libya Border Wall After ISIS Attacks," *International Business Times*, July 8, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/tunisia-build-libya-border-wall-after-isis-attacks-1992063>.

million in aid to Tunisia, including about \$175 million for security assistance and \$80 million for democracy programs.<sup>26</sup> Here are the various steps taken by the United States since Tunisia's election:

- **February 27, 2015:** The United States announced that Tunisia would get eight Black Hawk helicopters for its fight against jihadis.<sup>27</sup>
- **April 10, 2015:** Washington announced that it would increase military aid to Tunisia threefold this year and help train its troops. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave no figure for military aid, which he said would rise 200 percent in 2015. Another American official claimed that last year's package was \$60 million. Additionally, Blinken said it would provide Tunisia with more equipment, weapons, and technical support, as well as training the Tunisian army in border management.<sup>28</sup>
- **May 14, 2015:** The United States sent the Tunisian military its first batch of promised military equipment upgrades, including fifty-two Humvees and a twenty-meter patrol boat. The patrol boat is the first of four to be delivered to improve Tunisia's maritime security, joining a fleet of twenty-two other boats manufactured by the United States. The fifty-two Humvees are to improve the Tunisian army's mobility and response along its borders with Algeria and Libya.<sup>29</sup>
- **May 21, 2015:** Following President Obama's meeting with Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi, it was announced that Tunisia will be named a "major non-NATO ally" of the United States. This designation provides it access to extra military assistance.<sup>30</sup>
- **June 3, 2015:** The United States and Tunisia signed a loan guarantee agreement allowing Tunisia to access up to \$500 million in financing from international capital markets.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Recommendations**

##### *Strengthening the Rule of Law*

As alluded to above, Tunisia's draft security bill is highly controversial and has major critics inside and outside of the country. More than a decade ago, in 2003, Ben Ali passed a terrorism law that was regarded as against human rights as well. It had many loose definitions and unjustly led to many arrests that had nothing to do with terrorism. From 2003 to 2011, a number of individuals arrested were not terrorists at first, but became radicalized while in prison, in part because if one person in a given family was a suspect, then fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins related to this individual might also be thrown into prison. These types of actions are a recipe for creating new unnecessary enemies. As we saw after the March 2011 prisoner amnesty following the creation of a transitional government, many of the individuals who had been radicalized in prison were then involved in the spreading of global jihadi ideology with Ansar al-Sharia.

<sup>26</sup> "US, Tunisia boost security ties," *AFP*, May 20, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/us-tunisia-boost-security-ties-193651752.html>.

<sup>27</sup> "Tunisia to get 8 Black Hawks for fight against militants," *AFP*, February 27, 2015, <http://cngenglish.alarabiya.net/en/News/africa/2015/02/27/Tunisia-to-get-8-black-hawks-for-fight-against-militants-.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Tarek Amara, "U.S. to triple military aid to Tunisia," *Reuters*, April 10, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/10/us-tunisia-us-idUSKBN0N122E20150410>.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer Ciocchon, "US Delivers First Chunk of Tunisia's Anti-Terror Kit," *Tunisia Live*, May 14, 2015, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2015/05/14/us-delivers-first-chunk-of-tunisia-s-anti-terror-kit/>.

<sup>30</sup> Nahal Toosi, "U.S. to upgrade Tunisia's ally status," *Politico*, May 21, 2015, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/05/tunisia-us-major-non-nato-ally-118187.html>.

<sup>31</sup> "United States signs \$500 million Loan Guarantee Agreement with Tunisia | U.S. Agency for International Development," *USAID*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/june-3-2014-united-states-signs-500-million-loan-guarantee-agreement-tunisia>.

Only last week, Human Rights Watch reported that since March 2015, the Tunisian government has been restricting travel for those under the age of thirty-five.<sup>32</sup> No doubt there are security concerns, but actions such as these are quite easy to abuse, which seems to already be occurring. Therefore, if the security bill is passed, it will only lead to a repeat of what has already occurred, which would suggest the Essebsi-led government has not learned anything from the past—hardly a surprise though given that many of the leaders including Essebsi were previously part of the Ben Ali regime.

Moreover, since the uprising in 2011, there have still been a number of cases of activists and bloggers being arrested for alleged speech violations. Most recently, in March, satirist Migalo, whose real name is Wassim Lahrissi, and television host Moez Ben Gharbia were arrested for offending the president.<sup>33</sup> There are still laws on the books which state that an offense against the president is punishable by three years in prison. These and similar laws need to be revoked or highly reformed; they do not live up to free speech or the ideals of a country hoping to become a consolidated democracy. Following Essebsi's election last December, he wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Post* articulating his three goals for the country. Among them was "strengthen[ing] our young democracy." It is important for the United States to make sure he keeps to his words. Therefore, it is incumbent on Washington to put maximum pressure on the government to not fall into this trap. Otherwise, many in a few years will be wondering how this all went wrong and what happened to Tunisia, the so-called "darling" of the Arab uprisings.

#### *Security Sector Reform*

Many Tunisians think that nothing drastic will change unless major steps are taken to address the corruption in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). Very little has been done in terms of making reforms or purging elements from the Ben Ali era.<sup>34</sup> Further, the new minister Najem Gharsalli was a judge under Ben Ali who has been accused of deep corruption by many within civil society.<sup>35</sup> Many of the old practices of the former regime are creeping back, including within the prison system. For example, the Tunisian Organization Against Torture (OCTT) is currently investigating almost seventy torture cases from 2015. OCTT chief Mondher Cherni has warned about this "epidemic" and how it is a return to the Ben Ali police state, and about the government's "reluctance" to investigate torture claims adequately,<sup>36</sup> highlighting the MoI's impunity. Torture is an easy way to radicalize anyone—this must end, and the United States should not stand by idly and ignore this wretched trend that is rearing its head again. As a result, prison reforms have to take place; otherwise, prisons will likely continue to be an incubator and training ground for jihadism as they were from 2003 to 2011.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, many arbitrary arrests are once again occurring, even if they have no connections to jihadi networks or attacks. I personally know someone who was arrested in the past few weeks after the attack in Sousse who had nothing to do with it. Such abuses could be a source of radicalization or re-radicalization for those who

<sup>32</sup> "Tunisia: Arbitrary Travel Restrictions," *Human Rights Watch*, July 10, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/10/tunisia-arbitrary-travel-restrictions>.

<sup>33</sup> "Tunisia arrests comedian, TV host for offending president," *AFP*, March 13, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/tunisia-arrests-comedian-tv-host-offending-president-155125851.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Monica Marks, "Plagued by Insecurities," *Sada Journal*, March 5, 2013, <http://carnegiedowndraft.org/sada/2013/03/05/plagued-by-insecurities/>.

<sup>35</sup> Monica Marks, "Tunisia opts for an inclusive new government," *Monkey Cage*, February 3, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/03/tunisia-opts-for-an-inclusive-new-government/>.

<sup>36</sup> Zeinab Marzouk, "#Back\_To\_Ben\_Ali: Tunisian Cops Love Torture," *Tunisia Live*, June 5, 2015, <http://www.tunisia-live.net/2015/06/05/return-tunisias-police-state/>.

<sup>37</sup> Louis Loveluck, "Planting the seeds of Tunisia's Ansar al Sharia," *Middle East Channel*, September 27, 2012, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/27/planting-the-seeds-of-tunisia-s-ansar-al-sharia/>; and Aaron Y. Zelin, "Tunisia: Uncovering Ansar al-Sharia," *Think Africa Press*, October 25, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/vicw/tunisia-uncovering-ansar-al-sharia>.

had previously quit jihadi movements in the past few years. If they continue, the pool of potentially reactivated jihadis would create an even larger problem for the state. Therefore, it is imperative that the United States works with Tunisia on professionalizing the MoI and its police forces. They need to better learn the art of intelligence gathering and, once a case starts, doing the proper paperwork for preparing a case to go to court. A major retraining and reeducation could be something the United States helps with in terms of capacity building. It is true that the FBI has already been assisting along these lines, but this type of effort will take a long time since it will require years to reverse the rot and corruption from forty-five years of authoritarian rule. Further, just like training soldiers and security forces, just because one provides training to national and local law enforcement in Tunisia does not necessarily mean it will stick or that those who receive it will utilize it, as we saw in the case of Iraqi troops withdrawing from Islamic State attacks in Mosul in June 2014.

A perfect case of this is the fact that, according to a Tunisian colleague, many police officers are seen sleeping on the job when they are allegedly supposed to be protecting and guarding the state and individuals from harm.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, there was a major delay in the deployment of more police to the scene of the terrorist attack in Sousse. The attack took place over almost 35 minutes, and the gunman was able to return to kill some of the wounded before the police arrived.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it is crucial for there to be a sense of duty and discipline instilled within the police force for any of this to work out. Throwing money at the problem will not fix this; what is needed is concerted and patient training as well as a willingness on the part of the Tunisian government to reform these deficiencies. The key is to transform the body of the force so that it is seen as a protector, and not as a force that takes away individuals' rights or becomes involved in abuses of power.

Related to this, many courts, police stations, and police equipment were destroyed during the uprisings.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, instead of only providing money, it would be worthwhile if the United States funded specific rebuilding projects. That way, it would cut down on potential corruption from the government and also provide new jobs for locals since the economy remains the most important issue for the average Tunisian. This would provide more soft power for the United States since it would be specifically engaging locals, while also rebuilding capacity and allowing law enforcement and the judiciary to more efficiently get its job done as well as have a location to actually do it. Additionally, beyond rebuilding, the United States can help with new projects as well, which would push things forward even more by providing tangible benefits that the local populace can see instead of monetary promises that are not as readily visible.

#### *Public Relations and Transparency*

One of the things that the Tunisian government has had difficulty with since the uprising—an issue that has plagued all governments, including the Ennahda-led one, the technocratic one, and the Nidaa Tounes-led one—is the poor ability to properly communicate after attacks have occurred. In all high-profile cases, including the attack on the U.S. embassy, the assassinations of leftist politicians Shukri Belaid and Muhammad Brahmi, the Bardo Museum attack, and the Sousse Beach attack, the government has been slow at articulating transparently what occurred and what authorities are doing about it. If it wants to solidify its democratic bona fides, it needs to move away from the more shadowy, murky, and secretive aspects of reporting on investigations. The public has a right to know and deserves the most professional and transparent understanding of what has occurred.

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<sup>38</sup> See for example: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=903629459691369&set=a.214720398589282.51744.100001539708105&type=1&theater>

<sup>39</sup> "Tunisia attack: Sousse police slow to respond - PM Essid," BBC News, July 4, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33387382>.

<sup>40</sup> Monica Marks, "Plagued by Insecurities."

Two recent examples in the aftermath of the Sousse Beach attack highlight these deficiencies. First, when Essebsi announced the reimplementation of the "State of Emergency," he said that "if similar attacks occur again, the state will collapse."<sup>41</sup> Not only was this comment the height of irresponsibility, it was also quite amateurish. Instead of reassuring the public, he was using fear as well as essentially egging on jihadis to conduct another attack to test Essebsi's theory. Moreover, on the same day, the MoI spokesman explained that it did not want to blame the attack in Sousse on the Islamic State because advertising their involvement would radicalize the public.<sup>42</sup> Instead it blamed AST, which has more or less been defunct for a year now—this in the face of evidence that the Islamic State conducted the attack while providing pictorial proof that the perpetrator had been with them as well. Similarly, when the attack on Bardo occurred, the government blamed KUINI, even though the Islamic State claimed responsibility and provided the names of those involved. This illustrates a major public relations and transparency gap as well as lack of trust in the public to remain vigilant and resilient. The United States can provide advice on how to better professionalize the government's public persona and ability to articulate properly to the public.

### **Conclusion**

Beyond reforming issues related to the security front, everyone is well aware that Tunisia needs serious economic reforms that affect the entire country and not just those on the coasts. Removing the red tape for starting a business or allowing foreign companies to hire and invest, undertaking infrastructure projects in the interior, and building up the tourism industry in the interior are a few things that could be done. The reality is, at the end of the day, most Tunisian citizens just want to support their family and help their children grow up in a normal environment, live a relatively easy life, and be able to travel within their country without feeling insecure. Not all is lost, and the Tunisian government can right this ship, but it needs to do a lot more, and not fall back on old habits from the Ben Ali era, which have already proven failures. It also needs to have a vision that goes beyond rhetoric. It needs to inspire the younger generation; otherwise individuals who have connections or are well off will move to Germany, France, and elsewhere for better opportunities, while those that might not have those opportunities could be swayed more easily into joining the jihadis, who could provide guidance and a vision even if the individual does not necessarily agree with the ideology from the beginning. The United States should be there to lend a helping hand based off our own experiences and best practices with transitioning countries in Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe. The Tunisian people deserve an honest and good ally; the United States can be that. Let's help the Tunisian people complete their dream that started more than four years ago—the hope remains, and America can provide guidance and assistance.

<sup>41</sup> Conor McCormick-Cavanagh, "Tunisia's president warns of state collapse if another attack takes place," *Middle East Eye*, July 4, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/tunisias-president-warns-state-collapse-if-another-attack-takes-place-577003900>.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Sweeney.

**STATEMENT OF MR. WILLIAM SWEENEY, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS**

Mr. SWEENEY. Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, and distinguished members of the subcommittee.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. If you could push that little button there to amplify your remarks.

Mr. SWEENEY. Thank you. Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Deutch, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, better known as IFES, I deeply appreciate this opportunity to discuss Tunisia's fragile democratic transition.

Before I begin, I would like to echo my colleagues' statements on the Sousse tragedy. Our thoughts are with our partners in Tunisia and those around the world who lost loved ones.

Madam Chairman, it is not the first election that establishes a democracy, but those that take place years or even decades later. Tunisia's planned 2016 municipal and regional elections will be the country's next democratic test. Continued support by the U.S. Government and its allies in the international community is imperative to the success of the municipal and regional elections.

To briefly summarize our written statement, there are several key electoral issues the Tunisians and their international partners must address prior to the local elections planned for 2016.

The first priority should be the drafting of a legal framework for municipal and regional elections. None currently exists. IFES recommends the adoption of a unified consolidated electoral law that will regulate all types of elections and referendums in Tunisia. One national process and standard will build trust and prevent confusion.

Second, the ISIE, the Tunisian Election Commission, should be made a permanent entity, with the protections of civil service, and be further developed to provide professional, efficient, and sustainable election administration. As an independent agency, the ISIE must build the capacity and professionalism of its regional offices to undertake the organizational burden of the local elections.

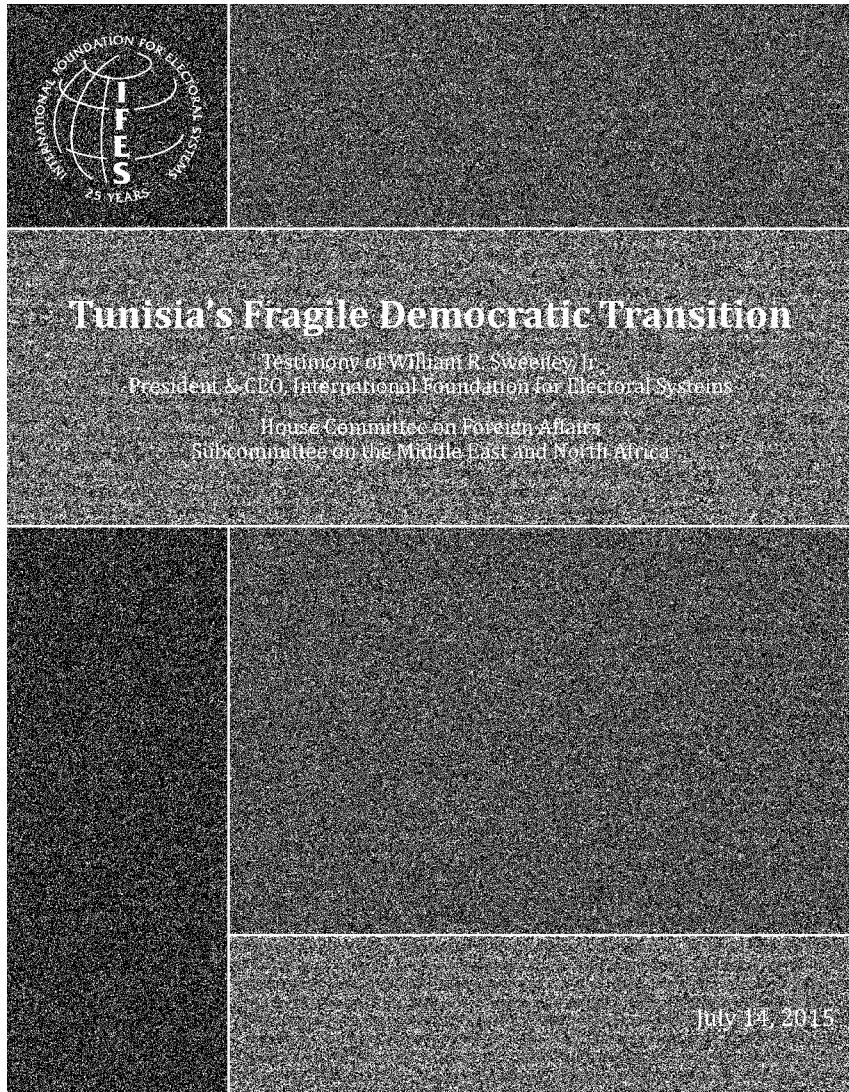
A third priority is to confront and implement lessons learned from the 2014 elections. For example, campaign finance regulations were overly strict, while enforcement measures were lax. The ISIE should also seek to improve its voter and civic outreach strategies. Media, particularly radio outlets, should improve standards on election coverage. Finally, demographics demand a focus on youth. Over a third of Tunisians between 15 and 29 remain jobless. To this group, a dictatorship and a democracy are still much the same.

Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Deutch, I conclude by reiterating that while Tunisia is a job well done, it is also a job not finished. American assistance, particularly for democracy and governance activities, will continue to play a critical role in strengthening Tunisia's fledgling democracy. IFES commends the people of Tunisia for their hard work, sacrifice, and continued dedication even in the face of unspeakable violence and intimidation. We are

proud to partner with ISIE to ensure there is a vote for every Tunisian voice. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sweeney follows:]



**Testimony of William R. Sweeney, Jr.  
President & CEO, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)**

**"Tunisia's Fragile Democratic Transition"**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa**

**July 14, 2015**

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Ted Deutch, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, I deeply appreciate this opportunity to discuss Tunisia's fragile democratic transition.

Since 1987, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, better known as IFES, has worked in over 145 countries to support citizens' right to participate in free, fair, transparent and accountable elections. IFES has been active in the Middle East and North Africa for over two decades; its current programming in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya and Tunisia empowers the individuals and institutions that make democracy work at every turn of the electoral cycle.

IFES provides its partners across the globe with sustainable, locally-tailored technical assistance to strengthen capacity and promote electoral inclusiveness. IFES arms local authorities and civil society activists with information on democratic norms, international standards and best practices for electoral and political processes; trainings for key stakeholders on democratic and transitional issues; and tools for civil society activists to implement civic education activities and prime their country for a democratic transition or consolidation.

Since 2011, IFES' Tunisia programming has been supported by the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), as well as, to a lesser extent, our bilateral partners at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom (FCO); the Open Society Foundation (OSF); and Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

Madam Chairman, the March 18 Bardo National Museum and June 26 Sousse Imperial Marhaba Hotel terror attacks saddened Tunisia's friends and allies, particularly those of us who have, since the 2011 fall of former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, partnered with the people of Tunisia to realize the country's full democratic potential. We express our deepest condolences to our colleagues in Tunisia, as well as the people of Belgium, Britain, Colombia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Russia and Spain – our thoughts are with you during this difficult time.

Quite understandably, the question now is, "What's next?" The Sousse attack undeniably brought to bear an uneasy truth: there are external and internal forces that do not want to see a free, democratic Tunisia. This is a critical moment for the country and its stabilizing impact on the region: Tunisia's democratic transition is fragile and requires sustained, multi-sectorial assistance. This is particularly true

for its 2016 local elections and the current fight against violent extremism, which will necessitate the redress of economic and social exclusion and the promotion of moderation through greater religious tolerance. This final point has become more critical after the Sousse attack, which led authorities to pledge to close some 80 unlicensed mosques (24 thus far have been shuttered) and reestablish a state of emergency, which was only just lifted in March 2014.

There are two critical components in considering Tunisia's democratic future:

- First, Tunisia is a work in progress. While it is not a failure, a waste of taxpayer dollars to be abandoned, it is also not a completed success story, a democracy so sound that its international partners should congratulate themselves and walk away. Madam Chairman, the job isn't done in Tunisia, and American support is critical to maintaining the momentum of democracy.
- Second, continued and increased American engagement with democracy and governance programming is key to a prosperous, secure Tunisia. As highlighted in the Department of State's 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, efforts to strengthen global capacity for good governance and credible elections underpin the potential impact of all other types of aid, including for Tunisia's economic, military, education, health, and security sectors.

#### **Introduction: Tunisia at a Crossroads**

In 2014, Tunisia held three free and fair elections in three months: an October election to select a new parliament – the Assembly for the Representatives of the People (ARP) – and two consecutive rounds of presidential elections. Parliamentary elections saw the moderate Islamists of the Ennahda party receive 31.79 percent of ARP seats and Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia), the umbrella party of former President Ben Ali supporters, business leaders and anti-Islamist secularists, receive 39.63 percent of the vote. Voter turnout for these elections reached 69 percent. The November and December presidential elections saw the leader of Nidaa Tounes, Beji Caid Essebsi, win in the second-round run-off election with 55.68 percent of the vote (voter turnout was 59.04 percent in the second round).

In a commendable democratic gesture, losing candidates in both presidential elections publicly acknowledged their defeats and congratulated winners – a significant sign of political maturity and respect for the process.

The 2014 elections marked the second phase of Tunisia's democratic transition; the first phase being the 2011 election of a transitional National Constituent Assembly (NCA) to draft a new constitution. The inauguration of the newly elected ARP on December 2 and the new President of the Republic, Beji Caid Essebsi, on December 31 formally marked the end of the 2014 electoral process.

The three 2014 elections were credible, fair and enjoyed a high degree of public confidence. Importantly, these elections also showed clear improvements from the 2011 elections, demonstrating the willingness and ability of the Independent High Commission for Elections (*Instance Supérieure Indépendante pour les Élections* [ISIE], elected in January 2014), in partnership with NGOs like IFES, to quickly develop its capacity and advance the electoral process.

Despite these successes, Tunisia continues to need assistance to further improve the conduct of elections and ensure that results are widely accepted. In the years to come, Tunisia's government will need to fight complacency and deliver on crucial promises to create a greater sense of civic responsibility and strengthen the economy to provide its citizens with opportunities for a fruitful, lawful livelihood. In short, the international community, with American leadership, must continue to support Tunisia and its institutions during this tenuous moment in its history.

#### **Legal Framework for the 2014 Elections: Strengths and Challenges**

Madam Chairman, Tunisia's first post-revolution encounter with a directly elected government verged on turbulence. Elections in late 2011 gave Ennahda the leading position in the country's constitutional assembly, leading it to form a "troika" government in coalition with two smaller, secular center-left parties, Congress for the Republic (CPR) and Ettakatol. Crisis came in 2013, when two leftist opposition politicians were assassinated. The success of Tunisia's transition was under threat, and with an eye on the fate of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda entered a national dialogue with opposition parties and agreed to hand over power to a neutral, technocratic government in early 2014.

Tunisia's new Constitution, passed in January 2014 and largely praised as progressive, establishes a mixed system in which power is shared between the parliament and president. Given the emphasis on decentralization, parliamentary elections are considered to have more influence on the future of Tunisia, as the largest party in parliament is entitled to name the prime minister and is charged with forming a government that can obtain majority support in the assembly. The president's powers are largely focused on national security and foreign affairs.

On May 1, 2014, the NCA passed a new electoral law, *Electoral Law No. 2014-16*. IFES assisted during an open and consultative drafting process, which included seven hearings with Tunisian and foreign legal experts, as well as civil society representatives. Other laws have been passed regulating the work and functions of the ISIE; stipulating the date of the first parliamentary and presidential elections after the adoption of the Constitution; and the freedom of audiovisual communications, resulting in the creation of the High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communications, or *Haute Autorité Indépendante pour la Communication de l'Audiovisuel* (HAICA).

In adherence with the 2011 electoral law, the 2014 law continues a closed list proportional representation system with male and female candidates alternating on party lists for gender parity,<sup>1</sup> using the largest remainder method for seat allocation. The 2014 law also maintained electoral boundaries established in 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> This system involves each party presenting a list of candidates to the electorate. Voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. Winning candidates are taken from the lists in order of their position on the lists. A "closed list" means that the order of candidates elected by that list is fixed by the party itself, and voters are not able to express a preference for a particular candidate.  
[http://aceproject.org/ace\\_en/topics/esd/esd02/csd02c/default](http://aceproject.org/ace_en/topics/esd/esd02/csd02c/default)

While the electoral progress of 2014 should be commended, notable issues in the law included a restriction on the right to vote for the military and internal security forces; prohibition on political parties to finance their presidential candidates; an unclear definition of election campaigning; excessive restrictive provisions on campaign activities; cumbersome rules on the coverage of contestants by the media; potential conflicts between the ISIE and HAICA in regards to the regulation of media coverage during elections; lack of obligation for electoral contestants to publish detailed campaign accounts; and unrealistic deadlines for the resolution of electoral disputes. In the upcoming period, Tunisian authorities should work on clarifying, simplifying and amending laws and regulations to ease future processes and consolidate gains made during 2014.

#### **Election Administration: Triumph, Despite Flaws**

Although the ISIE was elected in January 2014, an electoral law under which it could work did not pass until May 2014 – this gave the ISIE six months to organize three rounds of elections. Of the nine members elected by the NCA, three are women (one of whom is a former member of IFES' staff).

Overall, the electoral process enjoyed the active participation of candidates, observers and voters. Despite time constraints, lack of trained professional electoral officials and related operational pressures, the elections were a success. Nevertheless, some problems were evident:

- **Voter registration and education.** In June 2014, the ISIE launched the first phase of voter registration, which suffered from poor timing: it proved to be too close to the elections, and was too brief. There was also some confusion among potential registrants regarding the need to register at all, and voter outreach and education was limited, began late, and, according to election observers, were generally inadequate. The total number of registered voters reached 5,285,136 (50.5 percent of whom were female), about 71 percent of the estimated number of eligible voters. The 4.2 million citizens who had registered in 2011 were not required to register a second time.
- **Campaign finance** regulations were overly strict, while verification and enforcement measures were lax.
- **Election Day incidents** noted by observer delegations included instances of illegal campaigning, improper electioneering near polling stations, a visible lack of impartiality among polling staff and confusion during the counting and tabulation processes. Despite these occurrences, the incidents were limited in scope and isolated.

Madam Chairman, I'm pleased to report that the ISIE has welcomed IFES' support and opened the door to close and transparent collaboration. For example, ahead of the presidential elections that followed the legislative elections, the ISIE acted to rectify problems by removing polling staff who acted partially and increasing regulations regarding who may congregate near polling stations. Issues that continue to noticeably necessitate intervention include the ineffective disbursement of public campaign funds, limited voter education campaigns and reported isolated incidents of violence across the country. IFES looks forward to working with the ISIE to rectify these persistent issues.

Interestingly, and despite the technical issues identified during the 2014 elections, the Harvard-based Election Integrity Project (EIP, which devises a global annual ranking of election integrity) ranked Tunisia's presidential elections 25th and parliamentary elections 34th in the world (in comparison, the U.S. was placed 42nd and 45th for the 2012 presidential elections and 2014 congressional elections, respectively). Therefore, it is safe to say that over the last four years, Tunisia has made genuine progress toward credible elections.

#### **The Status of Tunisian Women: Setting an Example for the Arab World**

Since its independence in 1956, Tunisia has granted more rights to women than any other Arab country. Tunisian women were at the forefront of the 2011 revolution that won them, along with their male counterparts, access to such fundamental rights as freedom of expression, the press and association. The 2014 Tunisian Constitution was widely praised as progressive, particularly in the space of women's rights:

- Although an early draft included Ennahda's phrase "complementarity to men," this position was retracted and "equality" for all male and female citizens was substituted;
- Article 34 requires the state to ensure the representation of women in elected assemblies;
- Article 40 states that "every male and female citizen has the right to work in decent conditions and obtain fair wages";
- Article 46 specifically enshrines the protection of women's wealth, the principle of equality and commits to fighting violence against women; and
- As noted earlier, Tunisian electoral law stipulates alternating male and female candidates on party lists. These protections make Tunisia one of the rare countries in the MENA region with a constitutional obligation to strive for gender parity in elected assemblies.

In terms of its commitment to international conventions on women's rights, Tunisia formally withdrew all of its reservations to the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in April 2014. Despite the fact that it had already ratified the convention, Tunisia is the second Arab entity (after Palestine) that currently holds no reservations on any of the provisions of CEDAW.

Encouraging trends can also be seen in Tunisia's legislature. The current composition of the 217 ARP deputies includes 72 women, 33 percent of the parliament. Faouzia Ben Fedha, a woman, is one of the two ARP vice presidents, and of the nine committees represented at the ARP, three are led by women. One of these Chairman is Kalthoum Badreddine, a leading politician from Ennahda who heads the powerful Committee on Internal procedures, Immunity, and Parliamentary and Electoral Laws. Mrs. Badreddine has been a close partner with IFES throughout the transitional period and previously headed the NCA's Committee on General Legislation, which played a pivotal role in drafting the Constitution.

Despite significant progress in the realm of women's rights, there is much left to be done: of the 27 presidential candidates, only one was a woman. Tunisian women also continue to suffer from discrimination on legal family matters, such as inheritance or custody rights. Additionally, Tunisian

women carry the brunt of socio-economic disenfranchisement – it is estimated that out of the 20 percent of Tunisians with low literacy, 75 percent of them are women.

#### **IFES Programmatic Successes**

Over the past four years, and with the indispensable support of the U.S. Government, IFES has helped build Tunisia's capacity to hold credible elections, successfully provided on-going support to the development and operations of the ISIE and continues to play a role in helping the Tunisian people move forward in their democratic transition:

- Through direct training and training-of-trainers for poll workers, IFES has prepared 1,200 ISIE poll workers for Election Day. Moreover, the ISIE adopted over 100 of IFES's suggestions for operational improvements;
- In an effort to streamline the use of technology, IFES supported the development of a public webpage (<http://www.isie.tn/>) and internal web portal for the ISIE;
- Given previous shortcomings on voter and civic education programs, IFES has contributed to significant improvements to the design and scope of voter and civic education programs;
- As part of its legal support, IFES assisted in the drafting process of the legal framework on elections; and
- In the climax of the electoral period, IFES supported the creation of an Election Day Media Center for the 2014 elections. This center served as a focal point for election-related coverage, significantly increasing the flow of information to the public. This process was conducted in parallel with support to the ISIE on its communications strategy.

IFES has worked to ensure that its Tunisia funding is highly diversified, and as such, has worked with international donors' to support the monitoring, oversight and implementation of campaign finance regulations during the electoral process via trainings for judges, lawyers and members of the body responsible for monitoring campaign expenditures ahead of the 2014 elections. IFES has also supported local civil society led oversight of campaign expenditures.

Finally, IFES worked with the Tunisian Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) to improve voter outreach strategies to Tunisian adults with low literacy. A result of this collaboration was the conceptualization, design, development and production of three visual tools that will be used by MSA teachers. For example, every MSA teacher has received an IFES-prepared "educational briefcase" teaching kit that includes a teaching manual on elections, evaluation and technical forms, posters, materials for polling station simulations (transparent ballot box, tally sheets forms, ballot papers, etc.), leaflets and stationery.

This project has had an unexpected impact in the MENA region, as the briefcase is the first teaching manual and module specifically designed for low literacy adults. This places Tunisia as a pioneer and a regional leader on these issues. Furthermore, the concept of the educational briefcase drew a great deal of interest and led to a very positive evaluation of the project. MSA representatives were subsequently invited to participate in regional forums in Mauritania, Egypt and Sudan in order to present the concrete

achievements of the project. These regional events gathered experts on literacy, as well as officials from the North and West African regions.

#### **Three Key Issues Beyond 2015: Legal Framework, Local Capacity and Identified Inadequacies**

The 2014 Constitution stipulates that Tunisians directly elect municipal and regional councils. These first democratic local elections are expected to take place in 2016, and will serve to entrench democracy at the level most impacting Tunisians' everyday lives. Ergo, it is vital to bolster Tunisia's democratic transition through continued support by the U.S. Government and its allies in the international community.

Madam Chairman, the first priority must be the drafting of a legal framework for municipal and regional elections – none currently exists. Legislators must pass an election law governing the conduct of local elections; IFES recommends the adoption of a unified, consolidated electoral law that will regulate all types of elections and referendums. Furthermore, voters must be informed about new regulations that may be included in the legislation, and about major differences, such as, for instance, how the electoral system will be structured in comparison to the 2014 elections.

A second priority should be the building of a professional, efficient and sustainable election administration. This is of particular importance in governorates where electoral regional offices showed signs of weaknesses during the 2014 elections. The ISIE itself must build the professionalism of its regional offices, which will bear the organizational burden for the local elections that will be so critical to building an efficient and firmly rooted democracy at a grassroots level. Furthermore, municipal councils must be provided with adequate decentralized powers and authority and be given commensurate financial means to take resolute actions to respond to constituent concerns. A lack of financial and political means could discredit local councils and deepen frustration and skepticism toward the value of democracy.

A third priority is to address issues observed during the 2014 elections: the ISIE must increase the information available on municipal councils and local elections, while local stakeholders must improve the quality and quantity of information for potential voters. Ideally, this would mean improvement of the ISIE's voter and civic outreach strategies. Additionally, local radio must improve its standards on election coverage – this is critical to the success of local elections, as many rural voters receive their news primarily through radio outlets.

#### **IFES' Programmatic Strategy**

Predicated to continued USG support, IFES will collaborate with such local partners such as the ARP; the ISIE; regional election commissions (or *Instance Régionales Indépendantes pour les Élections* [IRIEs]); the Court of Accounts; the Administrative Tribunal; the Ministry of Education; and the Ministry of Social Affairs to address these three priorities.

In May 2015, IFES received a \$3.75 million, three-year MEPI grant to enhance legal frameworks for municipal elections. In order to cultivate a system that reflects the will of the electorate, IFES will

strengthen the professionalism of the electoral institutions that administer local elections and increase participation and civic engagement in local elections. In order to achieve this, IFES will highlight youth outreach activities, create innovative civic education programs, engage in voter information campaigns targeted to adults with low literacy, and utilize voter information campaigns focused on the voter registration period and Election Day procedures.

Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Deutch, make no mistake: local elections will play a fundamental role in the consolidation of the democratic process by ensuring Tunisia's transition from interim power structures to permanent, decentralized, and citizen-run entities that will govern the country going forward. It is therefore critical that the local elections are well administered in a professional and credible manner, and that the results deriving from them are accepted by all stakeholders.

As in many countries, Tunisia's highly polarized political situation is reflected in its geography: there is more support for Nidaa Tounes in the north, and more support for Ennahda in the south. The effective conduct of local elections will help ensure that no additional divisive factor entrenches the country in an ideological divide that could engender political instability.

#### **Conclusion: Recommendations to Support a Free and Democratic Tunisia**

In making the initial transition toward a free and open society, Tunisia serves as a model for the Arab world's struggling democracies. However, a multifaceted approach – built upon the foundation of democracy and governance assistance – will be critical to consolidating the democratic gains of 2014.

##### *Engaging the Young and Economically Disenfranchised in Political Processes*

Among Tunisia's most urgent priorities are its faltering economy and subsequent threats to its national security. Although demands for economic change were at the heart of the 2011 revolution, the country's economic situation has only worsened and could lead to a loss of confidence in peaceful democratic change.

The economy grew at only 2.3 percent in 2013 and 2.8 percent in 2014, which is well below pre-revolution trends and inadequate to generate the jobs the country needs. Fiscal and trade deficits also remain high. Tunisia's unemployment rate reached 15.2 percent in 2014, compared to 13 percent before the uprising. These rates have been preserved by an increase in temporary employment in the public sector that is not sustainable in the long term.

About 33 percent of young Tunisians (aged 15 to 29) are not classified as employed, engaged in education, or undergoing training (this lack of economic opportunities is further compounded in the southern regions). It is also this demographic – unemployed youth with scant hope for the future – that is susceptible to the lure of the Islamic State's lucrative salaries and relative job security. It is of the utmost importance to democratically engage these Tunisian citizens who, four years after the revolution, still feel excluded from Tunisia's mainstream society and economy. To this group, a dictatorship and a democracy are still much the same to their daily socio-economic lives.

*Continued Electoral Assistance*

U.S. democracy and governance assistance must establish electoral mechanisms that provide a free and fair medium for new political forces to express their socio-economic priorities. Given Tunisia's relatively small size, a significant impact could be made during this critical period with minimal funding.

However, it is also imperative to remember that elections alone do not make a democracy; credible institutions are also a vital ingredient to democracy. The danger of the post-election period is that political caution and institutional resistance will coalesce to suppress the momentum of broad, reformist initiatives. The immediate task of restoring stability should not obscure the greater importance of fundamental change in the relationship between the Tunisian state and its people.

Beyond short-term measures to address the current security crisis and encourage new economic dividends from the democratic transition, Tunisia must adopt a more ambitious reform agenda in order to fulfill the ideals of the revolution, meet the aspirations of its people and address the underlying weakness and failures that became entrenched during the period of authoritarian rule.

For example, the Tunisian Constitution mandates a decentralization of decision-making that has yet to be established. Such decentralization will be essential to make the state more responsive to the demands of Tunisian citizens in more socially deprived regions. Extending access and improving the quality of basic services such as health and education in these areas is essential to reducing Tunisia's regional disparities.

*Increasing U.S.-Tunisia Exchange and Engagement*

American political leaders – particularly the U.S. Congress – should continue high-level engagement with Tunisia to demonstrate American support for its democratic transition at a time rife with negative regional trends.

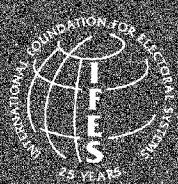
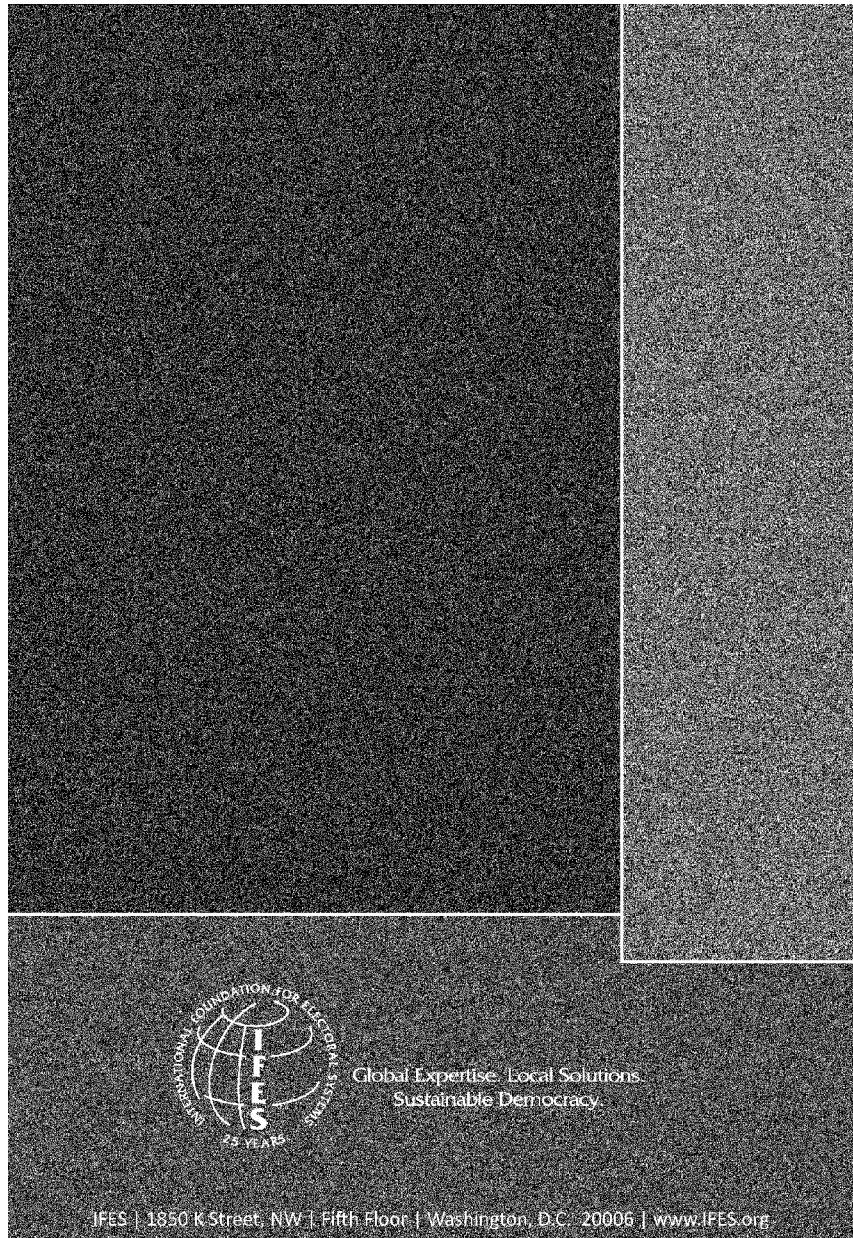
American politicians and officials should encourage Tunisian political leaders to seek broadly supported solutions to pre- and post-electoral issues. The U.S. should also deepen its relationships with civil society and emerging reform-minded politicians, who may offer the best hope for the country's medium-term political development, and consistently offer encouragement and assistance to the reform of state institutions, including the decentralization and the improvement of public administration. More broadly, youth exchange programs are an excellent investment in promoting an understanding of American ideals and familiarity with democratic procedures.

Above all, the U.S. should ensure that it does not lose focus on Tunisia at a time when other urgent security crises in Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Iraq demand ongoing attention. In the longer term, Tunisia's continued democratic development could be of enormous significance for the MENA region. The U.S. must make every effort to effectively support it with a consistent and varied approach.

There is something irreversible when creating democratic institutions that are rooted in a popular revolution. It will be almost impossible to revert back to a dictatorship in the near future. The electoral

process in Tunisia is thus far a success to be noted in an Arab world that is still marked by either ongoing civil strife or revolutions (with the notable exception of Morocco).

Madam Chairman and Ranking Member Deutch, I conclude by reiterating that while Tunisia is a job well done, it is also a job not finished – American assistance, particularly for democracy and governance, will continue to play an irreplaceable role in strengthening Tunisia’s fledgling democracy. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems commends the people of Tunisia for their hard work, sacrifice, and continued dedication to democracy, even in the face of unspeakable violence and intimidation. We are proud to partner with you and the U.S. Government to ensure there is a vote for every Tunisian voice. Thank you.



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Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And thank you to all of our panelists. And to start our question and answer period, we will begin with Mr. Chabot of Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate you giving me the time.

The high profile attacks at Tunis and Sousse have certainly exacerbated Tunisia's economic challenges. Tourism, after all, is a significant percentage of Tunisia's GDP. And those attacks probably, they certainly appear to have been aimed at the tourism industry, which would then in turn probably spur dissension amongst the Tunisian people against the government.

Let me ask you this. What steps are the Tunisians taking to prevent additional attacks in the future? And what would you think would be the impact should there be another terrorist attack of this sort on the political environment, on the economy of Tunisia? And I would welcome anybody who might like to address that.

Ambassador Green, if you wanted to take it first, that would be fine.

Ambassador GREEN. Sure. Thank you. Thanks for the question.

Well, first off, obviously if, and let's hope it never occurs, but if there were another attack, it certainly would continue to increase anxiety, put pressure on the government, and rattle the nerves of the principal audience for tourism, which is just miles away in Europe.

So I think several things are important here. First off, again, to recognize the current impact on the economy. Tourism is awfully important to Tunisia, as you mentioned in your question. And this has certainly rattled tourism. The Tunisians have taken a number of steps to provide immediate security in some of the tourism areas. And while the images may be unsettling of having armed guards along the beaches and in some of those sites, they are certainly understandable. I think everyone recognizes how difficult they can be.

But I think the more important steps that need to be taken are addressing the underlying problems in the economy. This is an economy built by an authoritarian regime at a different time, an overwhelming bureaucracy that stifles entrepreneurship and adds not only tremendous burdens to entrepreneurs inside the country, but openly discourages foreign direct investment. And while the government obviously needs to take on security challenges and to worry about tourism, it cannot put off much longer some of these fundamental reforms that are the key to creating opportunity down the line.

As was mentioned by my colleagues, we have very high youth unemployment, some of the highest youth unemployment anywhere. As long as young people believe that there is future hope for opportunity, I think they are prepared for some of the hard choices that will need to be made.

However, if they don't see opportunity, if they don't believe that they have a government committed to taking on some of these tough choices and underlying reforms, then when you see security rattled by terrorist strikes it only raises the anxiety, increases the frustration, and sadly, I fear, also causes young people to disengage

more and more from democratic institutions that are so essential to the country's future.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Let me turn to another question rather than go down the line or I won't get another question out. Is the U.S. doing enough by way of security assistance in cooperation with Tunisia? How do we help Tunisia solidify its democratic gains made thus far?

And briefly, maybe I will start with you, Mr. Sweeney, if we can just go down the line this way, what are your organizations doing to assist them in democratic foundation? Mr. Sweeney?

Mr. SWEENEY. Thank you, sir. First of all, our organization is not involved with security issues except insofar as how they affect an election process. I would say that the United States is stepping up in response to the requests of the Tunisian Government.

The NATO designation, a number of other steps that have been taken in the last few weeks are all very positive. But I would also go back to your last question, sir. The attack by terrorists is not just at the tourist industry. The tourist industry is 15 percent of the economy.

The attack is at the legitimacy of the democratic progress and the remaining 85 percent of the economy that Ambassador Green very pointedly made the comment that this 85 percent was built up under an authoritarian period, and now there are so many efforts to open that economy and bring it into the 21st century. And all of that progress is under threat by terrorism as well.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Mr. Zelin, briefly.

Mr. ZELIN. The U.S. has been doing a lot over the past 6 months in terms of providing different types of assistance, whether it is more Blackhawks, whether it is in terms of the NATO designation, as well as helping out in other types of military equipment.

One of the key issues here is that Tunisia has had this jihadi problem bubbling up under the surface for a good 20 years. The issue is, is that many different realize it because most of the Tunisians involved in it had been involved in it outside of Tunisia because of the authoritarian system of Ben Ali. So after the uprising in 2011, a lot of it started coming back into the country. And now because of some of the policies that occurred post-2011 in the early years in terms of not necessarily taking the threat as very serious, we are now seeing some of the backlash as a result of this.

So it didn't come out of nowhere necessarily. It is more a process that is coming into the fore moreso because of things that have already occurred.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. Mr. Campbell—Madam Chair, can he respond briefly? Okay. You can respond very briefly, Mr. Campbell.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I will defer to Mr. Zelin on the security. But just to amplify Ambassador Green's point and add to that quickly, that in terms of structural changes that are needed in Tunisia that may help address the security, it is a top-down country, very centralized, with great regional disparities. And they have an opportunity coming up this year and next year to decentralize, to put decision-making more at the local level, and to engage citizens in helping to control the decisions that affect their lives at the local level.

It won't have the same immediate impact as the security sector reform, but I think it is a part of the longer term solution.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much. And Mr. Green, very briefly.

Ambassador GREEN. Yeah, if I might, I think it is important to remember that many of the militaries in this part of the world were created to protect the government from its people.

This is a military that is transitioning to being what we would refer to a military that protects the country from its threats. That is a difficult transition, A.

And B, we have talked a bit about I think what Les has referred to is a non-sexy issue, and he is right, improving the ability of ministries to communicate, to work together, to control expectations in the public, and to encourage the public to buy into the solutions. If you don't have those communications, when the military moves, people will run in the opposite direction.

Fostering that investment, that personal investment in that capacity is crucial for a country that is trying to make the transition they are.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. My time has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chabot. Excellent questions. Mr. Deutch of Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I just had a couple questions about the perception of the people and the way they view government.

First, the decision by Ennahda to join a secular-led government, I would like our witnesses to offer your thoughts on whether that was a decision that was a top-down decision or does it reflect the will of the people? And ultimately, what does it mean long term for a party like that to have made that decision to enter a secular government? Ambassador?

Ambassador GREEN. It is interesting. And the organizations represented here, many of us held our meetings together with the ministries in advance of the elections. And they were talking even back then of trying to foster what is enshrined in the constitution. And that is the separation of church and state, and to enshrining freedom of worship.

The fact that you saw the Islamist party move so quickly to condemn the Charlie Hebdo attack, that you saw it move so quickly to concede defeat and congratulate the winner after the election, I think that shows that there is really buy in and momentum around this idea of a uniquely Tunisian Government and structure of government that respects faith.

I think it is great in the wake of an election in which everyone feels very good about what has happened, it is great in the wake of the success of the constitution. What I think we are saying is it is vitally important we stand with them to build the capacity of the government to be effective, to be able to meet the needs of average Tunisians so that that important sense and philosophy can continue.

Mr. DEUTCH. All right. Mr. Campbell?

Mr. CAMPBELL. It is a great question. And I wondered that myself. I remember sitting in the Ennahda office, you know, not long after they made the decision, before they stepped down but when they were making the decision to step aside. And I too wondered about motivations. But I think in the Middle East generally, but

especially in Tunisia, looking for moderation, I don't think we have to question motivations too much.

What seems important to me is that Ennahda, whether because of, you know, I don't know if it was, you know, genuine commitment to the principles that they espoused or not, but because of what happened in Egypt they wanted to avoid that, which I think was important. Because they felt constrained by public opinion, especially after the political assassinations, there was lot of blowback when secular politicians were assassinated. Because of international expectations. There was pressure from the international community saying, you know, we want you to behave democratically. I think for those sort of outside reasons they decide to step aside.

And I think what is important in a democratic transition is not necessarily that the actors are motivated by, sort of, you know, thoughts that we would prefer, but that they feel somehow constrained both by domestic opinion but also by international pressure. And they certainly felt constrained, and they acted in a way that we would I think applaud. And I think if we would continue to reward that behavior we would get more of the same behavior.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay. You are nodding, Mr. Zelin?

Mr. ZELIN. I agree pretty much with what everybody says. But on the other hand, I also think that it also is a sign of the fragility of the system as it is, where a winner can't take all just yet, otherwise people might feel that things could really get bad.

So I do believe that in terms of the next national election, if a party wins and takes all and then becomes truly ruling party instead of in this broader national collection, that is when I think we could really see signs that this democracy is really solidifying in many respects.

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Sweeney?

Mr. SWEENEY. I concur with just about everything that has been said by my three colleagues. And the question is really can the consensus toward shared values and tolerant society and a belief in democratic values and an acceptance of the results of the ballot process continue to be accepted?

And Tunisia had a very, very rocky, difficult time. And the two assassinations forced a great many Tunisian leaders to have long conversations with themselves and their colleagues about how they wanted their society to evolve. And that is why the 2014 election was so important to all of us, particularly the Tunisians, about how they wanted their society to move forward. And I think that is the challenge ahead.

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Sweeney, how much of the decision do you think is made because of their views of what is best for Tunisia or their views based on dealing with or avoiding certain externalities, as Mr. Campbell touched on?

Mr. SWEENEY. All of the above, sir. I mean you have a variety of motivations that came into play, as with any political decision. And that political decision resulted in a desire to go forward through an electoral process and then live with the results of that electoral process.

And I think those of us who were in Tunisia and saw the reaction to the assassinations in particular knew that this society and

the political leaders in the society and the religious and business leaders in the society knew that they had the challenge to come together or else they would lose their country.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Before yielding back, I just would like to note that while we have enjoyed two hearings together today, I do not believe we will have a hearing tomorrow together, which makes this the most opportune time to wish you a happy early birthday. And I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thirty-nine again. Do you believe it, Mr. Deutch?

Mr. DEUTCH. Another anniversary.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. You don't believe it, I know. Thank you, Ted. And now I will yield my time to Mr. Wilson, who is not here. Mr. Trott.

Mr. TROTT. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I want to thank the ranking member as well for holding this hearing. And I apologize I came late and did not hear some of your statements, gentlemen. So if I ask questions that you covered, it is a scheduling issue here in Congress.

And my question is to any member of the panel. How big of a problem is corruption in Tunisia? Obviously, we have never successfully solved the problem in Afghanistan. I am just curious how big of a hurdle, an obstacle that will be going forward?

Ambassador GREEN. I think corruption is a very significant problem in the country. Again, it dates back quite some ways, but certainly rose to its peak under Ben Ali and the authoritarian regime that he led. And it has stifled individuality, entrepreneurship, and touched nearly every aspect of Tunisian life.

That is why organizations like those represented here believe so strongly in the need to work on democracy and governance and build government capacity. It really gives them the tools and the ability to take on these issues. It is hard to see them succeeding if they don't.

Mr. CAMPBELL. You know, I agree, although I would say that, you know, having traveled the world a lot, Tunisia doesn't feel immediately as corrupt as you might find say in Afghanistan, just as an example, in terms of the day to day feeling.

What I view as the bigger issue, and I think many Tunisians will express this maybe in slightly different terms than I do, is the economy is run on the basis of cartels, franchises, concessions. You know, it is crony capitalism. So certain families. If you are in the right family and you get the right conferred by the government to have a, you know, monopoly over cement production or something like that, you are filthy rich, and everyone associated with you is filthy rich.

And I think the prevailing feeling in Tunisia is if you aren't in those circles, then you are really in deep trouble and you are, you know, scraping and so on. And if you are not in the right region, so you are not in the right family, the right neighborhood, the right region, you feel like you are shut out and there is no opportunity to get ahead.

So this may sound like Pollyanna-ish sort of thinking, but the idea of equal opportunity of a meritocracy, for example government jobs being awarded on the basis of qualifications rather than some

kind of, you know, hand me down, these are important things. And this is the hard and very unsexy work of democracy assistance is trying to work on government reforms that don't simply allow people to give out, you know, franchises that allow certain people to become billionaires.

So that is the kind of corruption I think is probably more relevant to this discussion in Tunisia. And it exists there.

Mr. Trott. And is there a desire, Mr. Campbell, by the business community to try and move away from crony capitalism and create some equal opportunity?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I actually accompanied Raj Shah when he was the head of USAID on a trip to Tunisia. And he met with a lot of business leaders, not something I normally do. But it was interesting to be a fly on the wall. They talk that way in the sense that business leaders were looking for modernization. So for example they were looking for access to capital. You know, capital is all kind of tied up and hard to get.

They are looking for modern approaches to real estate and to property ownership and so on. So I think in that sense they want access to money, they want the modern systems, I think they would like to join the clubs, the economic clubs around the world.

But having said that, when you are in those circles you get a real sense that this is an elite. And you see even with the, you know, with the now ruling party, I support what they have done, I think they are doing a good job, but there is a kind of an unsettling undercurrent within the ruling party of the crony capitalists having again circled the wagons.

So I think the answer is 50–50. Sure, they would like to have a modern economy, but I don't think they are going to give up the monopoly power they have.

Mr. Trott. Does the new constitution make inroads toward protecting, you know, and addressing some of those issues? Hopefully, it addresses civil liberties and gender equality, but how about business concerns?

Mr. CAMPBELL. That is a good question. I don't think I can answer that accurately. I believe it does, but I haven't looked at that specifically.

Mr. SWEENEY. If I might go back to my prior experience heading global policy for a Fortune 100 company, it is hopefully not in the constitution, but in the series of economic reforms that can be more easily changed in response to developments within the marketplace.

Constitutional change, as we know in this country, tends to be very, very difficult. The question becomes around terms of foreign direct investment. International companies will not invest in Tunisia's economy as long as it is maintained by crony capitalists who are circles and families and cartels, which is an appropriate description.

I think, as, going back to Ambassador Green's statement, there are a number of important reforms underway in the Tunisian process, which hopefully will attract foreign investment. Foreign investment is as much under attack as the tourist industry, because you are not going to invest where you don't think there is security to

set up an organization and your people are safe. That is as much a threat of the terrorism.

However, going to your question, there is hope for Tunisia because making a great deal of progress, and one of the national conversations they have been having at the legislative and political level is how do we make Tunisia attractive for foreign investment so that other companies and other countries can invest and create jobs here?

Mr. Trott. Madam Chairwoman, I see my time has expired, but I just have one other question. You know, the border security issue is particularly acute given the threats from Libya. Is the U.S. doing enough?

And how can Tunisia improve its border security, which I think is a key part of the success going forward? Particularly if the U.S. is doing enough. That is the question I want to hear answered.

Mr. ZELIN. Yeah, the Tunisian Government has been doing a lot more related to the border security with Libya, in particular in the past 6 months or so, starting in February when they sent more reinforcements from various parts of the security apparatus, and now they have announced only last week that they are trying to put up a border fence as well as in some areas sort of a moat between the borders.

But the reality is, is that, it is not just necessarily an issue of people that are going to Libya and getting training going back. You have individuals who are already in the country that have access to weapons or people that are coming from Algeria, so it is not just a Libya issue here.

It is sort of a wholistic approach that needs to be taken, and, you know, obviously helping out with the border security is definitely something the U.S. has already been doing with drones, aerial surveillance, I believe, already. And I know that the Algerians have been assisting with the Tunisian Government a lot on these issues as well, since they do share a border.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Mr. Trott. Thank you gentlemen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Trott. Mr. Connolly of Virginia.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. And welcome to our panel. To pick up on the sort of the Libya aspect here, if you look at Tunisia and Libya, they are both overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim population, 97 and 98 percent. Libya's GDP per capita is actually higher. It is 6623 with a literacy rate of 91 percent. Tunisia is 4,415 and 80 percent respectively. And the female literacy gap is actually less severe in Libya.

So there are a lot of commonalities here. What is the nature of the divergence? Is it the violent history? Is it Qadhafi? Why are we seeing two very different paths with these two neighboring nations? Mr. Zelin.

Mr. ZELIN. I think one of biggest ones is that, unlike Ben Ali, who actually abdicated his power and went to Saudi Arabia, and the military didn't intervene but allowed sort of a transitional process to begin, in Libya of course as we know, Qadhafi wasn't interested at all in losing any power, and he went all the way until he got killed. I think that that is one of the biggest differences.

And then as a result of that you have seen trends add on top of there exponentially from there in part because then there became a huge weapons bazaar in Libya and therefore a proliferation of different militias.

And part of it, too, is that historically Libya or Qadhafi the way he ruled, sort of ruled different tribes as well as regions of the countries against each other, and that is why you are sort of seeing these different battles between different parts of Libya.

Whereas in Tunisia, obviously there has been issues between sort of the coastal and interior, but it is just different historically.

Mr. CAMPBELL. If I can jump in, I mean, I think there is an obvious answer and then a couple less obvious answers. I the obvious difference is the French Colonial history. And one of the, you know, leftovers of that or leave-behinds, as well as enlightened Tunisian leadership in the 1950s and 1960s was a series of institutions, including civil Saudi institutions like trade unions. And so there was some sort of glue that held the country together. So that is kind of an obvious one. But I think it is important. We could tease it out, but it is very important.

The second big difference is the tribal makeup of Libya. Traditionally territories that were very, very separate, ruled as fiefdoms by tribes, kind of artificially stitched together. And I think if you take the tribal nature versus Tunisia, which was much more urban, much, much more urban, much less tribal, so if you take the existing institutions which came in part because of Colonialism, but also because of a very a, you know, very strong national structure, and then look at the tribalism of Tunisia with absolutely no institutions, those are the two big things that explain the differences.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yeah. Ambassador Green.

Ambassador GREEN. Thank you. I was struck by, in the days leading up to the election, we asked the acting President whether Tunisia could serve as a model for the region, and he said no, not a model; maybe an inspiration. And I thought that was right.

Tunisia in a number of ways is unique. The process that they undertook after Ben Ali fled, was a remarkable one. I think for all of us as observers watching the long process of the forums, the public forums they held around the country, I or I and NDI partnered in most of those forums. They listened patiently and took input, and they seemed to sincerely process that input. They were very cognizant of those youthful crowds that took to the streets in 2011.

So I think there were a number of steps that they took early on that created a unique mix. I think they are right. I am not sure we would ever say, okay, let's take this model and transplant it next-door. But I think the spirit and the ethos that has been brought to bear is something hopefully that can be fostered elsewhere.

And again, I think what you are hearing from us over and over again is we all look at this as a place where something good has happened through patient, persistent Tunisian-led work. We should never impose anything upon them, but where they are reaching out for help, as they are, we have a tremendous opportunity to help foster this and to reinforce it so that as the difficult challenges

come up—and they are facing them right now—this special model that they have created can survive.

Mr. CONNOLLY. My time is up, but I think the point you make is a very good one, Mr. Ambassador, your two organizations, NDI and IRI, working around the world, I think you are right. It is not necessarily a model, but within the Tunisian experience, there are things that can be replicated or at least benchmarked against.

And that is what we, I hope, can identify as the evolution continues so that others can benefit from the experience without slavishly saying it ought to be like Tunisia. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Connolly, very much. Dr. Yoho.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I appreciate you all being here. This is a good hearing because we see this as a fledgling democracy growing in an area that they are not very well welcomed. And I see the biggest threat is, you know, the surrounding countries see Tunisia as an example of, you know, freedom, liberty, starting to develop, and it scares them; and so they are going to do everything they can to erode that.

What can we do? And I know this question was asked earlier. Is there more that we can do or the Tunisian Government asking us, what would be probably the most significant benefit that we can afford them to help them keep their democracy going? Mr. Sweeney, if you want to start.

Mr. SWEENEY. Thank you, sir. The quick answer is there is always more, and particularly in the area of economic assistance, both in terms of direct grants, as well as helping with the Tunisia investment funds and a number of other areas.

In terms of security, I will defer to my colleague in terms of democracy and governance. Ambassador Green noted in his testimony that only 16 percent of programming is right now directed toward democracy and governance activities. And if we are to help keep Tunisians on the path toward democracy and full engagement in their society, we suggest there is more that can be done there as well.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Ambassador Green, let me ask you, because you were talking about—I lost my train of thought—you were talking about how the democracy was coming up, and there was a lot of corruption in the government—I think it was you—and that a lot of the people at the top were wealthy and they were, you know, crony capitalism.

How do you change that dynamic to where the people on the lower income scales seize opportunity? Because without opportunity, it is hard to support a government like that. What are we doing to change that—not we because I think the more we meddle, the more it gets messed up. What are they doing to change that internally?

Ambassador GREEN. Well, and I think my colleague, Les Campbell, put it well. The type of corruption they have is a crony capitalism and is a cartel-dominated system. So much of the Arab Spring which began here was out of frustration for lack of opportunity.

So I think what we can do is help to provide support for the fundamental policy reforms in the economy that they need to take and which they know they need to take. So we have to help them undertake those reforms to get rid of this stifling bureaucracy that is a holdover from the Ben Ali days so that young people—they have a very high percentage of college graduates. They have an exceptionally good education system in that sense.

But they have got this large population of college graduates, fairly well-educated, know there is something better, and are on the outside because they aren't one of those big families, as Les made reference to.

The government knows that we need to provide the technical assistance and the training as well as the investment to stand behind them as they get rid of this bureaucracy and create a vibrancy that will create a hope for the future.

Mr. YOHO. And let me ask, with the war going on in Syria, I just read an article that, I think, 33 Tunisians left to go to Libya for training to join ISIS and that the recruiters are being paid \$3,000 to \$10,000 per recruit; and when you are in a country that has 33 percent unemployment in the youth, I mean, that is attractive.

If the Syrian civil war, if we were to negotiate some type of negotiation through the U.N. With other nations to bring that to an end, would that help the situation in Tunisia? Mr. Campbell, you want to weigh in on that.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I think I would defer to Mr. Zelin on that one since he studies this specifically but—

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. ZELIN. You know, there are so many individuals involved in this movement now, that even with the Syrian conflict ending, which it doesn't seem like it is going to happen any time soon, I still think it is going to be an issue. And I have actually met Tunisians that have fought in Syria and returned to Tunisia; and some of them went purely for economic reasons because then they are able to provide remittances to their parents.

So, while there definitely people that go for ideological reasons, at least in the case of Tunisia, some go for economic reasons, too.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. And this is kind of off the mark here, but with the Iran nuclear negotiation and Iran going to gain more power and hegemony in the Middle East, how do you see this affecting the situation in Tunisia where fledgling democracy is trying to rise up, promoting liberties and freedoms different than what is normal in that situation, and do you think Iran will stand by and allow that to happen?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Maybe I will take a crack at this somewhat, but just to mention something that we haven't brought up because this is about Tunisia, but North Africa, or the Maghreb, we think of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. They have many things in common, including the French language, but the big thing that they have in common is that they are all staunch U.S. allies; so you do have a very strong series of three countries together, very strong U.S. allies, very much anti-Iran, no question. I mean I don't think you would find any sympathy for Iran in any way, shape, or form, in any part of society in Morocco, Algeria or Tunisia.

These are countries that want and choose to be close to the U.S., to Western partners. They are countries that want and accept all sorts of security assistance and so on. And the countries, Morocco and Tunisia particularly, that have the express desire and goal of transitioning to democracies.

So I think my answer is it is a little bit broad because Iran is so far away from them, but my answer would be these are bulwarks against the kind of extremism we are trying to fight. They are U.S. Allies, and they are looking and asking for assistance, so it is a wonderful opening.

And the three countries together, if they were to economically integrate more, could become a powerful and attractive force.

Mr. YOHO. Let's hope they do that and that democracy shows and shines over there of what freedom does. And I appreciate it. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Dr. Yoho. Mr. Clawson.

Mr. CLAWSON. What percent of the population would you all estimate is sympathetic, supportive of extremists that have violent goals? And if someone else has already asked that, I apologize for coming in a little bit late, but that tells me what kind of fertilizer is in the country. Right? So go ahead.

Mr. ZELIN. I can try and answer this sort of by proxy. So from about April 2011 until the end of August 2013, there is an organization in the country called Ansar al-Sharia, and it was openly able to proselytize its ideas without much government intervention until they designated a group at the end of August 2013.

And during their second conference, which was the last conference they were able to hold, there was about 40,000 individuals that attended it. They were going to have a third conference in May 2013, but the government didn't allow it, and they said that potentially up to 100,000 people were going to attend. Of course, it is difficult to verify because it didn't happen, but the country has about, I believe, 11 million people; so that is maybe 1 percent at best, if you are doing the most liberal estimate.

So it is really not that many individuals. And the thing to remember about Ansar al-Sharia is some of these people got involved just more for the proselytization aspects of it and not necessarily for the violent aspects that happened afterwards, because after the group was designated, many individuals actually quit the organization because they didn't want to be involved in the violent parts.

Mr. CLAWSON. Everybody agree with that?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I would just add one thing to this. Unfortunately it is hard to really quantify, but people are always struggling to find reasons why young Tunisians go abroad and join jihadist groups. I think there are many reasons, and we have tried to address some of those today, and other members, Representatives, have mentioned some of this as well.

But one of the reasons that is put forward by Tunisians that Tunisians go abroad is that there is not a lot of support for violent jihadi talk and behavior in Tunisia. Certainly it happens. We have seen these attacks, but it is not embraced and accepted. And there are a lot of other countries in the region where you can join a group and be open about it and sort of brag about being violent and killing people, and it is not a problem.

In Tunisia that is not an acceptable thing. And so, again, I don't know how that translates into numbers; but at least for right now, Tunisia is not an enabling environment, and it is exporting people because people that feel that way have to go elsewhere. It is not the only reason they go elsewhere, but it is part of the reason they go elsewhere.

Mr. CLAWSON. So there is not a certain portion of the mosques or others where there was open celebration to what occurred?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I can't answer specifically. I am not aware of that. I mean, I look at the Tunisian news. If it happened, it wasn't very obvious.

Ambassador GREEN. If I can, I think it is very hard to get specific numbers to think of it in those terms, but what I think you can do is look at the outside objective indicators. This is the country that is constructed by popular assent, the most moderate constitution in the region. In the Arab world, a constitution which protects freedom of religion, that is remarkably progressive in so many ways, enshrined the role of women.

So in the constitution, which they adopted by vote, it would certainly push back and be contrary to the extremism that we have seen in so many other places. And I found what Les said intriguing. Maybe that is one of the reasons why it is such a big source of foreign fighters in Syria. But the logical conclusion of that is when one day that conflict in Syria ends or winds down, we do have to think about what happens when they come back, and that will be a threat to the institutions in Tunisia because some of them will have been radicalized by their involvement in Syria. Again, another, I think, opportunity for the U.S. as a friend to offer assistance and to help as we can.

Mr. CLAWSON. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Clawson.

And we are in the midst of votes. We have 5 minutes left, so I will not be able to ask my questions, but I had the honor of visiting Tunisia with Speaker Boehner in a CODEL he led just a few months ago. It was after the museum attack and before this latest attack, and it certainly is a land of great promise; so we will pray and work for the people of Tunisia and throughout the region.

Thank you gentlemen, for your time and for sharing your wisdom with us. And with that the subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:17 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

## A P P E N D I X

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa  
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman**

July 7, 2015

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

**DATE:** Tuesday, July 14, 2015

**TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

**SUBJECT:** Tunisia's Fragile Democratic Transition

**WITNESSES:** The Honorable Mark Green  
President  
International Republican Institute

Mr. Leslie Campbell  
Senior Associate and Regional Director  
National Democratic Institute

Mr. Aaron Zelin  
Richard Borow Fellow  
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Mr. William Sweeney  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
International Foundation for Electoral Systems

**By Direction of the Chairman**

*The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.*

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## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON	<i>Middle East and North Africa</i>	HEARING
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Day	<i>Tuesday</i>	Date	<i>7/14/2015</i>	Room	<i>2172</i>
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Starting Time	<i>2:04 p.m.</i>	Ending Time	<i>3:17 p.m.</i>
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Recesses	<i>[0]</i>	( <u>  </u> to <u>  </u> )
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Presiding Member(s)*Chairman Ros-Lehtinen*

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*Check all of the following that apply:*Open Session Electronically Recorded (taped) Executive (closed) Session Stenographic Record Televised 

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TITLE OF HEARING:*Tunisia's Fragile Democratic Transition*

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SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:*Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Reps. Chabot, Wilson, DeSantis, Yoho, Clawson, Trott, Deutch, and Connolly.*

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NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an \* if they are not members of full committee.)*

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HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes  No   
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

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STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)**SFR - Rep. Connolly*


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TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_  
 or  
 TIME ADJOURNED *3:17 p.m.*



Subcommittee Staff Director

**Statement for the Record**  
*Submitted by Mr. Connolly of Virginia*

For the sake of stability, security, and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, the U.S. and our allies must understand and be capable of replicating the early success of the democratic transition in Tunisia.

The Jasmine Revolution in 2011 that brought about the end of the 23-year authoritarian rule of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali began a political transformation in Tunisia and sparked similar revolts against other regional authoritarian regimes. The subsequent democratic transition in Tunisia has shown early signs of success while other movements have regressed to authoritarian forms of government or succumbed to violent clashes between opposing political factions.

Informal political negotiations and a transitional government held Tunisia together in the immediate aftermath of the President Ben Ali's fall from power. Interim arrangements have since given way to the adoption of a constitution in January 2014 and elections later that year.

While Tunisia maintains a relatively nonviolent movement, neighboring Libya is mired in the chaos and violence emanating from domestic extremism and two warring governments. Both countries emerged from decades of authoritarian rule. Both Libya and Tunisia have homogeneous Sunni Muslim populations (97% and 98%). Libya's GDP (nominal) per capita (\$6,623) and literacy rate (91%) are actually greater than those of Tunisia (\$4,415 and 80%, respectively), and the female literacy gap is less severe in Libya.

However, one clear line of distinction that can be drawn between the transitions in Libya and Tunisia is that Libya has experienced a complete breakdown of consensus and inclusion while Tunisian leaders have found compromise amid difficult negotiations. Tunisia did not permanently exile former government officials from participation in the country's democratic transition. However, Libya's Political Isolation Law, much like the de-Baathification of Iraq, created disaffected populations and contributed to further strife.<sup>1</sup> Indicative of the delicate cooperation that exists within Tunisia, the current government is a coalition government that includes both the secular Nidaa Tounes and the Islamist Al Nahda parties. Tunisian leaders, including President Béji Caïd Essebsi, and those assisting the Tunisian democratic transition should nurture public discourse and eschew the eradication of political opponents.

These competing experiences should inform the U.S. assistance strategy in Tunisia. The U.S. has provided Tunisia with \$610 million in assistance since 2011, and the President's FY2016 Budget Request includes \$134 million, twice the amount that was enacted for FY2015. As much of 60%

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<sup>1</sup> Klaas, Brian, and Marcel Dirrus. "The Tunisia Model." *Foreign Affairs*. Web. 13 July 2015. <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/tunisia/2014-10-23/tunisia-model>>.

of this funding is security assistance. We must be careful that in an effort to secure progress made in Tunisia, we do not fan the flames that have destroyed other democratic movements struggling to balance security reform with efforts to defeat domestic extremists.

Responding to recent terrorist attacks is only one of the many challenges clouding the future of Tunisian democracy. The government that has taken shape will need to demonstrate that it can provide government services, promote economic growth, regulatory reform, and trade, and create space for civil society. Tunisian leaders have thus far navigated the process of building a democracy without any fatal setbacks. It would be in the best interest of the U.S. to ensure that they have the tools they need to continue their standout performance in the region.

